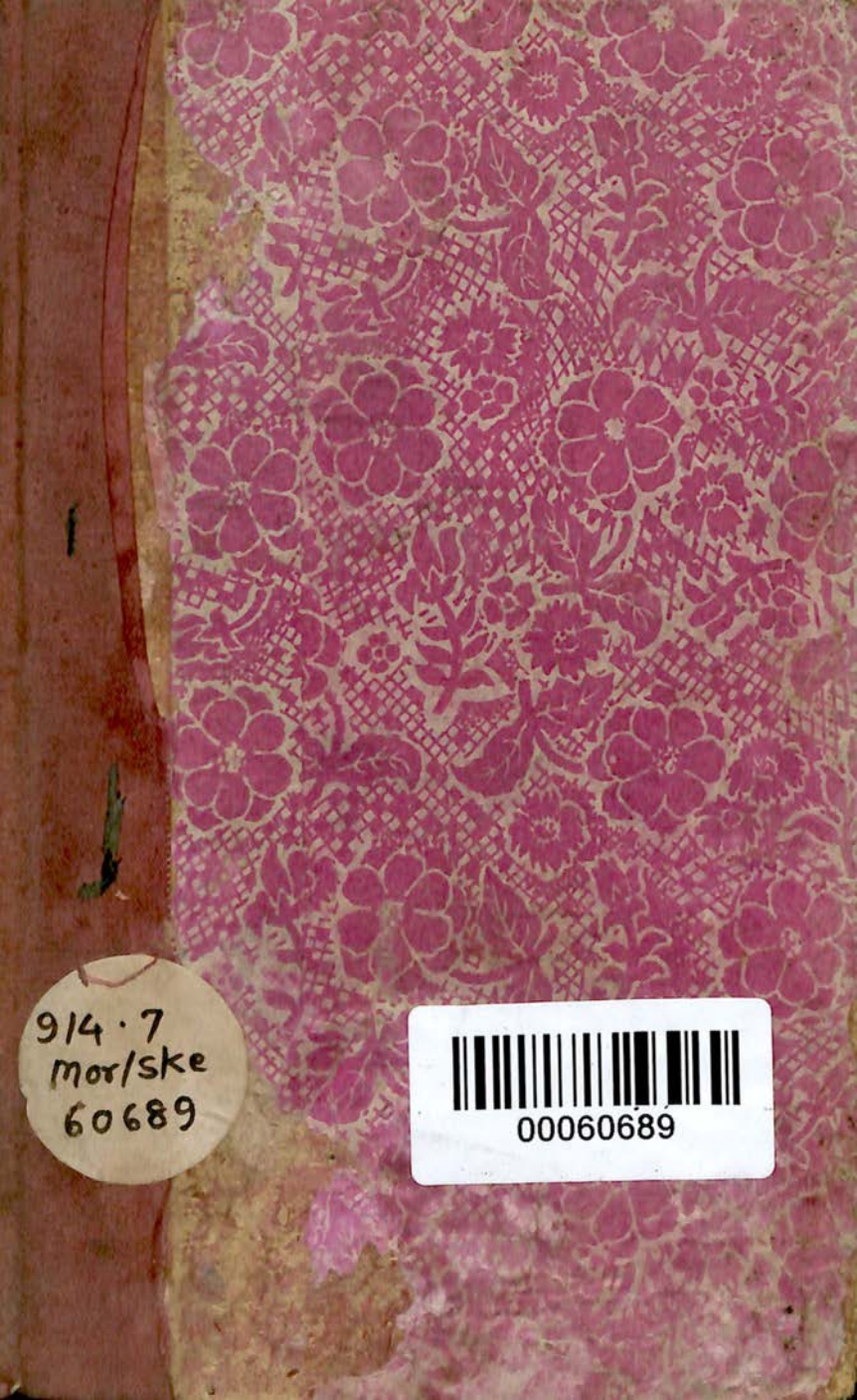
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SKETCHES

OF

RUSSIAN LIFE

BEFORE AND DURING

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE SERFS.

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EDITED BY

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PREFACE.

THE author of this book, hurt in a railway accident when paying a short visit to England a few years ago, became a patient of the able surgeon and warm-hearted gentleman to whom he desires gratefully to dedicate his volume.

That surgeon, an old friend of mine, presently afterwards wrote to me that he had met with a gentleman who knew more than most travellers of Russian Life; not only because he had lived long in Russia, and in its remoter parts as much as in the capital, but chiefly because he knew how to observe and seize at once the point of any character or incident. He had been persuaded to jot down some of his experiences, and here they were; surely, my friend thought, genuine enough to be worth public attention.

The rough sketches thus sent to me I condensed for publication, and submitted to the conductor of *All the Year Round*, who liked them so well as not

only to print them, but to publish many more from the same writer. In this volume they are reprinted, by permission, with substantial additions from papers since furnished to me by the author, who is still in Russia.

From the Mss. placed in my hands it was left to me to make my own selection of the matter to be published, and revise for the press whatever might seem best. I have made, perhaps, too free use of the license thus accorded to me, but have in no case introduced thoughts of my own that would impair the genuineness of a very faithful transcript of experience. Not the minutest trace of an imaginary fact has been added with the mistaken idea of heightening the effect of any incident; and the author, whose acquaintance I have had the pleasure of making during one or two recent short visits of his to England, is, I believe, as incapable of imagining fictitious incidents as he is quick in apprehension of the living interest of what passes around him.

H. M.

May 1866.

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RUSSIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

TWO SORTS OF WOLVES.

I HAVE spent fifteen years of a long life among the Russians in active business of divers kinds, by which I have been brought into close contact with men of all grades throughout the whole empire.

In Russia there are seasons when, and regions where, the mere act of travelling is an adventure of some peril. For example, the winter of 1860 was in Russia as in England memorable for frost; but the winter before that was memorable for snow. In several parts of Russia, the beginning of March 1860 brought a succession of snow-storms, the most violent that had been experienced for more than fifty years. It was my unlucky fate to be compelled to travel at that time, three hundred versts, or not quite two

hundred miles (a verst being about three-fifths of a mile), over a portion of the country which had been most heavily visited. And I began my journey only one day after the first great violence of the storms had subsided.

I had been living for some months in a town on the Volga, in the centre of European Russia, forty versts from Jaroslav, the government county-town. To reach that town I must traverse a wild and uninhabited track, where there were only two small hamlets, at one of which the twenty-verst post-station was to be found, if not buried in snow. My team of three horses, commonly called in Russia a "troika," had been carefully selected from the various stabling establishments in the place: the cost for driver and horses to be three roubles and a half (or about half a guinea, the rouble of a hundred copecks being worth a halfpenny or two more than three shillings), which was no great price for such a journey in such weather. Two wolves had been killed in our principal street within a week. One I had shot in my own court-yard the day before we started, and many reports were current of their hunger and unusual boldness. It was even said that a small village about thirty versts distant had been attacked by them in force. These facts and stories made me careful about requisite defences. My six-barrel travelling companion was carefully loaded and placed in my belt ready for use; a magnificent nine-inch bear-knife in a sheath, and a formidable blackthorn cudgel heavily weighted at the handle belonged also to my armament. The

brandy-flask, bag of provisions, bottle of water, matches, cigars, and portmanteau having been stowed away, I was about to step into the open sledge when a Russian neighbour came up and asked leave to join in the journey to Jaroslav. My neighbour, though a gentleman for whom I had much respect, was the last man I should have chosen as a travelling companion in a narrow sledge, for he weighed over twenty stone, had great difficulty in breathing, and, when once he was seated, almost required horse-power to get him up again. He was a phlegmatic, lazy, good-natured, monosyllabic, cigaret-smoking monster who was not to be refused; so, his request granted, he rolled in on the right side and filled three parts of the sledge. My Russian house-servants crossed themselves, whereby they meant "God give you a safe journey!" the members of my own family cried, "Good-bye, God bless you!" and the driver having gathered up the rope-reins, I jumped in, and with a noo-noo to the cattle, off we went dead against a blinding drift.

Fat-sides having observed my weapons, grunted in his own Russian, of which he made the least possible use, "Pistolet. Wolves. Shoot. Good."

"Have you any weapons?" I asked.

"No."

"Well; take this bear-knife."

"Good," he said again, and relapsed into his corner.

Daylight came struggling through the heavy morning clouds, and disclosed a cheerless waste of ridges and valleys of snow. The trees which at wide

intervals indicated the route, did not save us from often plunging into great pits of soft snow the moment our driver turned but a few feet from the track. This happened so often, and gave us so much trouble in digging ourselves out, that it was noon before we had made sixteen versts—hardly ten miles—having been six hours on the way.

At this point in our journey the driver sent the blood dancing through my veins, by the alarming cry of "Volka! Volka!"—"Wolves! Wolves!" I sprang from my seat, and, looking a-head, saw six great, gaunt, and no doubt hungry wolves, sitting exactly in our way, at the distance of about a hundred yards or less. Our horses had huddled themselves together, trembling in every limb, and refused to stir. We shouted and bawled, but the wolves also refused to stir. My fat friend, gathering a large handful of hay from the sledge bottom, rolled it into the form of a ball and handed it to me, saying, "Match." I understood him at once. The driver managed, by awful lashing and noo-nooing, to get the horses on until we came within a short distance of our enemies. By this time I had succeeded in setting fire to the ball of hay, and just as it began to blaze out well, I threw it in among them. It worked like a charm. Instantly the wretches parted, three on each side, and skulked off slowly at right angles, their tails dragging as if they were beaten curs. On dashed our brave team—lash, lash—noo, noo.

"Hurrah!" I shouted, with a lightened heart; "we are safe this time, thank God!"

"Wait. Look back," said Fat-sides.

I did so, and I saw the wolves, who had joined each other again in the centre track, pausing, as if to deliberate. Our horses were going at their utmost speed, the driver standing up and using lash and voice with all his might, to urge them on to the station, then only about a mile and a half ahead. Luckily, the road or track, as far as we could see, was free from drift, and our hope was that we could gain the station before the wolves, should they pursue us. Looking back just as we turned a bend in the track, I saw the whole pack in swift pursuit.

I had often been told that wolves will not attack a party unless in a large pack. Six was no large pack, yet here they were, coming up to attack us; there was now no doubt about that. Hunger through a long and severe winter must have made them daring. With the consciousness of an impending death-struggle, I prepared for the result. My thoughts went for one moment to my wife and children; for another, to the Great Disposer of events. Then, throwing off my sheepskin coat, so as not to impede the free action of my arms and legs, I sprang on the front seat beside the driver, but with my back to the horses and my face to the enemy. I said to the driver, "They are coming, brother; drive fast, but steadily. I have six bullets in this pistol. Don't move from your seat, but drive right in the centre of the track." My fat companion sat still in his corner, and neither moved nor spoke; but I saw the blade of my bear-knife gleaming in his hand.

The track had become worse, so that the horses could not maintain their pace. In a short time the wolves ran beside the sledge; the horses strained and shot on, keeping their distance, but in forcing our way through a drift we came to a walking pace, and the first wolf on my side made a dash at the horse next him. The pistol was within a foot and a half of his head when I fired, and the ball went through his brain. I shouted my triumph in English; my companion echoed it with a "Bravo!" The second wolf received my second fire in the leg, which must have shattered the bone, for he dropped behind instantly. "Bravo!" was again cried from the corner. But the same moment was the moment of our greatest peril. My pistol fell into the sledge, as, with a sudden jolt, our horses floundered up to their bellies in a deep drift; then they came to a dead stop, and there was a wolf at each side of the sledge, attempting to get in.

My bludgeon still remained. With both hands I raised it high and brought it down with the desperate force of a man in mortal extremity, upon the head of the wolf on my side. He tumbled over on his back, and the skull was afterwards found to have been completely smashed. As I stooped to regain my pistol, I was astonished to see my companion coolly thrust one of his arms into the wolf's mouth, and as coolly, with the disengaged hand, drawing the knife, with a deep and sharp cut, across his throat. A peculiar cry among the horses arrested my attention. Looking round, I saw another wolf actually fastened on the off-horse by the neck. The driver was be-

tween me and the wolf. He cried, "Give me the pistol!" I did so, and the poor horse was free. So also were we; for the other wolf ran off, followed by the one with the broken leg. The wolf last shot was tumbling among the snow. The driver handed me the pistol to put right, and begged another shot at the brute. This finished the engagement.

I cannot tell how I felt. I could scarcely realise our great deliverance. The driver secured the carcases to the sledge; and when we reached the station I was completely exhausted from the reaction of the strong excitement. My friend of the twenty stone chuckled much at his own trick upon the wolf he had killed. Instead of putting his arm into the animal's open mouth, as I supposed, he had stuffed into it the loose sleeves of his great sheepskin coat, thereby getting plenty of time to cut the monster's throat. His own arm was untouched. But the poor horse's neck and shoulder were much torn.

After consuming an enormous quantity of tea and part of our provisions, we left the station, and without meeting more adventures, except several diggings-out, arrived at Jaroslav at eight o'clock, having accomplished about thirty miles in thirteen hours. Next morning we found ourselves popular characters in the town. The driver's tongue had not been idle. My revolver underwent many an examination. The government or local reward for a dead wolf is three roubles, which we claimed and received for three. So the wolves, instead of killing us, paid our travelling expenses. The fourth animal I caused to be skinned,

for preservation, as a remembrance of the greatest peril I was ever in.

Jaroslav is the name of a large goobernie, or government. Russia is divided into such districts, the principal town of each being generally named after the district, and containing the whole machinery of local government—a governor-general, with soldiers, police, barracks, government offices, and officials of all sorts, who obtain their rank from, and obey the orders of, the supreme imperial power in St. Petersburg. I am not writing the history or geography of Russia, but am only recalling personal experiences and adventures, and therefore, having said so much, I go on with my story.

As this trip was made before the new law regarding foreigners' passports, which now enables them to travel for an entire year with one passport all over the empire, I was obliged to go before the governor-general for permission, in continuing my journey, to leave the government of Jaroslav. What is gained by the new passport system one may judge from what had to be endured before its time. I call at the offices entitled "Gubernator's Kansileery." The door-keeper tells me I must wait till to-morrow. Twenty kopecks, however, induce him to conduct me to the right clerk. This clerk looks over my old passport, and, for "a consideration," makes out a petition, praying the governor to give me a new one to go to St. Petersburg by way of Moscow; for another "consideration" he makes out the new passport itself, for which I pay

the legal sum of two roubles. I am then told to go to the governor's own house, in a distant part of the town, to get his signature. When I get there I am told that it cannot be done without a certificate from the chief of the police that I am quite clear on his books. By this time it is near four o'clock, and I am too late. A day is lost.

Next day, at ten, I am at the police-office, and, among a crowd of people of all sorts, am obliged to wait till two before the chief makes his appearance. In the mean time I have coaxed a secretary with another consideration to make out the certificate on the back of my old passport, that there may be no delay when he does come.

Well aware, as I was, of the practically irresponsible position held, and the almost unlimited power exercised by officials of this kind at such a distance from head-quarters, still I was scarcely prepared for the experience I acquired during a patient waiting of four hours for this official. I had been, as usual, asking questions and moving about from one part of the large room to another. There were no mere spectators present. That all had business was fully manifested by the enormously large papers each held in hand. These papers contained their various cases, as they were to be submitted to the chief of the police, and as they had been written out by the under functionaries of the police establishment for a consideration, duly or unduly proportioned to the nature of the cases and the demands of the officials. Accommodation in an inner room was offered to me, but

declined; for I wanted to know more of a Russian police-court.

"What are you wanting here, brother?" I said to a decent-looking man.

"You are an Englishman. I will tell you. You see that man in the blue caftan?"

"Yes."

"Well, my brother and I caught him stealing from my premises six months ago. He had two horses with him for carting my goods off, and, as we caught him in the act, we gave him and the horses up to the police."

"Well," I said, "that is a plain case easily settled."

"God help me! I thought so too. But you see they have been sending for my brother and me, on one pretence or another, from our village, fifteen versts away, every week for six months, writing papers and giving evidence, until I have cause to believe that the affair itself must have been a dream. I am so tired out, I cannot go on telling the truth any longer. Besides, it's of no use. Last week my brother saw the very same two horses in the police-master's carriage."

"Ah! I see; the thief is free at the cost of two good horses. And what do you do now? That paper is—"

"A statement that the whole thing must have been a dream and delusion on the part of my brother and myself, and that we have nobody to accuse. I wish we were quit of the business." And he crossed himself.

"Why do you cry, my dear mother, and what is your petition about?" I said to a poor woman.

"Oh, my lord, I have been cheated. I am a widow; my husband died three months ago. He bought the little house and garden twelve months before that, and paid two hundred roubles—all the money except twenty roubles. The police-master signed the deed of sale for it, but has forgotten all about it. The man that sold the place denies the selling and the paying. I and my children are turned out, and this is the fourth petition I have presented. I have no money to give his excellency, to make him remember."

Poor woman! The only appeal from official rapacity is to the emperor; his ears are indeed never shut to the lowliest of his subjects; but how can a poor woman tramp six hundred miles of Russian road to sue for justice?

Wandering among these confused but silent groups, I was heartily glad to be an Englishman.

An old gray-haired, long-bearded peasant, with a head like an apostle, attracted my attention.

"Good father, why are you here? What is that paper in your hand?"

"My son has been misbehaving and rebellious to me, his father, and I am come to get him whipped by the police."

"Is your son young, then?"

"He has seen thirty-four summers."

"How can you think of whipping a man of that age?"

"Well, you see, before he left me for St. Petersburg, nine years ago, he was, and had always been, a good and respectful son; but he has learnt bad manners amongst the fine folks. He drinks, sir; puts on fine airs; sets himself up against my authority, and is corrupting the rest of my children. I must get him whipped; for while I live I will be father of my own house."

Suddenly there was a bustle and stir. The waiting claimants for justice, with a score of prisoners under arrest, arranged themselves in rows all round the room, and I had time to ensconce myself behind a large and greasy merchant, when in came the long-looked-for chief of the police—judge, jury, law, and emperor in one. He was a colonel, dressed in full regimentals,—a man who seemed to be naturally bold, shrewd, and intelligent; but his nose was scarlet, his face blotched, and he reeled rather than walked. Doing his best to stand erect, he scowled upon the assembled mob, all of whom, except myself, stood bending and bowing before him.

He took paper after paper, glanced at and partially read some of them; gave his signature to contracts; passed, as the papers were read, sentence on each with marvellous rapidity; tossed some on the table, and ordered those who presented them under arrest; sent ten to be whipped—among the rest the old man's son; and before I was aware—so absorbed was I in observation of this swift torrent of justice—I found myself almost alone with his excellency, his eye resting on me for the first time.

"Ah!" he said, his tone and manner changing on the instant; "you are an Englishman, I perceive. What may your pleasure be?"

"Simply to beg that you will sign this certificate of good character, which I have here under your jurisdiction."

"It shall be done instantly; sorry to keep you waiting. You see how I am tormented by these *canaille*. Pray, excuse me. A safe journey. Adieu."

He thrusts me out, and I am driven to the governor-general's, to get his signature to my new passport. The governor-general has gone to dine: another day is to be lost. The hour of the diligence for Moscow for starting every morning is eight. The governor's office does not open until ten, so that the next day is also to be lost unless I choose to hire post, which would be a desperate proceeding in such weather. The signature is obtained, however, by the aid of a consideration to the clerk; the day passes heavily away; and next morning I start for Moscow, distant two hundred and sixty-three versts, in a public diligence, in company with four Russians and a German.

CHAPTER II.

THROUGH SNOW, BY DILIGENCE, TO MOSCOW.

In ordinary weather the road to Moscow from Jaroslav is one of the best and busiest in the empire. In both summer and winter it can be travelled over in twenty-eight or thirty hours. There are post stations every sixteen or twenty versts, where horses are changed, and a fresh driver is put on to every fresh team. These drivers are the most reckless and determined whips I have seen. No weather scares them, no obstacles stop them; the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals would put every man and boy of them in jail. The knout or whip is used without mercy; the men take especial delight in beginning at the top of a steep hill a fierce gallop, that grows to racing speed as they get near the bottom; so that the cattle and passengers find themselves up the next acclivity before the momentum is lost. They don't know the meaning of patent drag, but drive determinedly on at full stretch to the end of the station. The Russians cross themselves when a start is made, lie back in the most convenient manner possible, and amid jolting, bumping, cries, and lashing, go to sleep as composedly as if they were

in a railway carriage. Wheels will come off, poles break, and other casualties occur; but as spare ropes, hammer, axe, nails, and even spare wheels, are always carried, a break-down seldom causes a delay of ten minutes. This is summer travelling; the vehicle used being a "tarantas," a large double calèche without seats, placed on and tied to the centre of horizontal poles, for springs of the best steel would snap like glass. Passengers make seats of their luggage, and with straw and pillows save their joints from dislocation. Winter, however, brings other contrivances. The universal travelling "kibitka" is got out. This is a nearly square frame of wood covered with canvas, having a door on each side. The covered frame, which resembles a large box, is fixed on a low strong sledge. Primitive birch shafts are fastened to the front, the horses are put in, and the turn-out is perfect. Without the cattle it may cost two or three pounds, because it is all covered in. This is a luxurious winter equipage compared to the open sledge.

It was in a kibitka, dignified by the name of diligence, that we started at eight o'clock A.M. from Jaroslav. We had no sooner cleared the town than our difficulties began, not to come to an end for seven following days and nights. For three days since the great storm little snow had fallen, but there was a blinding wind lifting into clouds the snow already on the ground, and building it into mountain ridges right in our track. The smooth broad macadamised road was a myth, buried here six, or there ten, feet

deep, and in case of ridges or wind-sweeps, thirty feet. Traffic was nevertheless going on; indeed, had been going on during the whole time of the storm. A snow-storm, however fierce, never deters the Russians from a journey. For this reason a single track was commonly available, but that track was by no means a level or smooth one: it worked like Toby Tosspot's, "with sinuosities along," not only transversely but vertically, in a continued succession of ups and downs, from six to ten feet in depth, so that the horses' heads were generally in the hollow. When the kibitka was on the crest of the snow-wave, we soon found that our team of three good horses was totally unable to pull us over these dreadful "yamas." In many cases the six passengers got out to help the cattle, and even then it took a good pull all together to accomplish it. To save this labour three additional horses were added, at the first small village, at our own expense, and then we got on rather better. It would be tedious to enumerate how many times we were overturned, and had to dig ourselves out of the soft snow. Many vehicles of like construction to ours were struggling on under the same difficulties, to or from Moscow. At nine P.M. one of our horses gave up, died, and, having been cut out of his traces, was left to the wolves. At eleven o'clock another burst a blood-vessel, and shared his fate. A third gave up within a mile of the town at which we intended to recruit; and finally we had to get out and walk to a place of refuge, leaving the three remaining animals to pull the empty

carriage after us. We had, in sixteen hours, with three separate teams of fresh horses, accomplished the distance of forty-five versts, our pace being little better than two miles an hour.

The town we had entered is called Rostov, and had been for the two previous weeks the scene of an immense fair, second only to the great Nishni Novgorod fair held in August. It was nearly over when we reached the town. Had we come two days sooner, there would have been great difficulty in finding shelter: as it was, it was one o'clock in the morning before we got under cover in a large traktera, or inn, densely crowded with buyers and sellers from the fair,—a place steaming with all manner of odours. Wearied and worn out, and almost shaken to pieces, we were all glad to be huddled into a room twelve feet by fifteen; where, after drinking an enormous quantity of tea, and eating a cutlet—or an imitation of a cutlet in gutta percha—my companions went to bed on the floor. I, desiring better quarters, sought out the stables, where, rolled in my shirt and covered with hay—procured for a consideration—I passed four or five hours in a sound sleep.

A Russian hotel in the interior is the most filthy of all filthy places; for, as the floors are never washed, the mud and filth accumulate to an inch and a half in thickness, the walls are black and fœtid, tarakans—a horrible sort of large brown beetle—crawl in myriads over every thing, invading even the dishes out of which the traveller eats and drinks, and the dirty deal tables are further defiled with a

dirty linen cloth. The public rooms, generally lofty and spacious, are constantly filled with the offensive odour of the native tobacco. The waiters are all men dressed in print trousers and shirts; the trousers stuffed into long boots, and the shirts hanging outside the trousers; a parti-coloured band or scarf round the waist completing the costume. Their hair, like that of all the peasants, is worn long, cut straight round the neck, and parted in front like a woman's, while the beard is neither cut nor trimmed.

Most of the Russian merchants do all their bargaining in the inns, and while doing business swallow fabulous quantities of tea at a sitting. It is drunk in glass tumblers, and the sugar is taken, not in the tea, but with it—nibbled at, to sweeten the mouth before every gulp: no milk is used. The brass urn, or "samovar," contains the supply of hot water, which is kept boiling by inserting burning charcoal in the centre tube. Travellers may carry their own tea, sugar, and bread, and by paying ten or twenty kopecks will at any station or inn get the use of an urn. The hot water being brought to the carriage-door in summer, many travellers never enter one of these places, but sleep, eat, and travel in their conveyances for weeks.

Next morning we started at six o'clock with five horses, but had soon to add a sixth. This day was like the day before it, except that we killed no horses. As daylight vanished, we determined to push on during the night; but at eleven o'clock we lost the track in the dark, and stuck fast in a moun-

tain ridge of snow. After an hour spent in fruitless efforts at extrication, three of us set out in search of assistance. To our astonishment we presently discovered, by "the smoke that so gracefully curled" from several points at once, that we were wrecked in the midst of a straggling snow-covered village. A kind peasant gave us admittance, and sent help to our half-frozen companions. This day we made about thirty-two miles in seventeen hours. As I had slept with the horses on the previous night, so this evening the cow gave me a part of her bed.

We had passed six dead horses, some of them partially devoured, and four overturned conveyances, embedded in deep snow, beyond recovery until the spring. Where the passengers were, I know not: my companions said, "God knows," and crossed themselves. All along the track we had seen evidences of distress: wrecks of sledges, horses up to their necks in drift, men digging them out. But just before starting the next morning we saw the most horrible sight of all. Opposite the hut of our poor entertainer there had been men digging, to get into a house entirely buried in snow, and they had succeeded in rescuing a family that had been four days buried. This family was none the worse for its mishap; but the diggers had come on a sledge with its horse, driver, and two women frozen to death, and buried in the drift. They had got fast, and perished without help in the midst of a village. Caught in the greatest fury of the storm, they had not known their whereabout, nor had their cries been heard.

Three months after this, and when the snows disappeared, from two hundred and fifty to three hundred corpses were found, all of whom had met their death in this fearful storm upon the Moscow road alone. So I have been told, and fully believe.

Ten at night found us within a station of Pereslaf. After getting our conveyance under cover, and our light luggage removed to the house or den, I had time to visit an adjoining peasant's cot.

Here was a whole family spinning and weaving flax. The family manufactory included every process, from the scutching to the linen-weaving, all carried on within the space of a room twenty feet square. In a corner stood a mild elderly father scutching the straw from the flax; the mother sat near him, helped by a son, combing out the tow with hand-brushes; every now and then throwing small twisted rolls of the tow into a bunker, and plaiting up the long flax ready for sale or spinning. Three rather good-looking girls were spinning and twirling the thread, several young ones were winding and unwinding the yarn, and one girl was the weaver at her loom plying the busy shuttle. The whole machinery employed in this primitive workshop and family manufactory—hear it, ye Baxters of Dundee, and Marshalls of Leeds—loom included, would not cost two sovereigns. My companion and fellow-traveller, a young Russian, very soon was on good terms with the young folks, and as I sat down by the dame, the old man joined us, and we talked of the late storm and its con-

sequences, of the flax-work, and of how they sold what they made, to pay the baron. They were communicative on the prices they got for the different qualities, told me how they worked at this all winter, and on the land all summer; how the baron was a good man, but spent in Moscow and Petersburg his time and money, leaving his poor slaves to the tender mercies of a German steward, who skinned them unmercifully. One of their boys, they said, had gone, or rather had been sent, to the Crimea as a soldier, and they had never heard of him since; another son was at Moscow in a woollen fabric, and had to pay fifty roubles a-year, "obrok," to the baron. The two eldest girls had been ordered to marry after Easter, and to marry men they did not like. One of the men was a drunken worthless fellow; but ah, dear Heaven, had not their father the emperor—God bless him!—decreed their emancipation? And were they not soon to do what they liked, and be freed from the "obrok"? Their notions of liberty or political rights amounted to this, and no more.

Having sent my companion for tea and sugar, I asked the girls to prepare the urn, and further ingratiated myself by buying a piece of the linen they had made and bleached on the grass the previous summer. While the tea was being handed about, an old woman came in: the "swakha," or ambassadress from one of the intended bridegrooms. All marriages among the common people in Russia are negotiated by such go-betweens, who arrange preliminaries, extol the qualities of their clients, examine and decide on the trous-

seau of the bride, and act as head negotiators in the whole affair. When the father of the bride can afford it, money is demanded, and a written list of the "predania," or articles of the trousseau, is given in. The articles accordingly supplied are scrutinised, and accepted, rejected, or exchanged, according to the fiat of the old go-between. There is no courtship or personal affection before these marriages. The woman generally submits, as a matter of course, and becomes the slave of any brute appointed by the baron or steward, or by her father when no master interferes.

I know a family of free Russians, in which the father was of the rank of "chinovnick." He had four daughters, all accomplished, the eldest decidedly plain, the others good-looking. A suitor appeared for the hand of the youngest and prettiest, in the person of a young government official. His go-between, or swakha, required to know how much money the father would give, and what the "predania." "I give nothing," said the old man. "The elder sisters must be married first, and it is robbing them to give first to the youngest. If the young man will take the eldest, I will give four thousand roubles; if the second, fifteen hundred; if the third, a 'predane' without money; but if he must have the youngest, nothing." As the young man wanted to buy or bribe his way into a higher station of life, he offered to take the eldest of these girls for six thousand roubles. This would have wronged the other daughters, and the offer was refused. The youngest, who had set her heart on the fellow, pined; the others offered to give

up their claims to make her happy, but the father was inexorable. The poor thing was dead of consumption eighteen months afterwards, and the bargaining swain is now married to the eldest, richest, and least handsome. This happened in the capital, among what we called the "French-polished" Russians. But I must return to my poor peasants of no polish.

The swakha finding the field occupied by strange guests, confined herself on this occasion to an enumeration of the many excellences of the appointed husband, among which I remember one which sounded curious—it was, that though fond of brandy, he knew how to get it for nothing. Another was, that his father would not live long, and so, he being the eldest son, his wife would quickly become mistress of the whole family, and own the hut, pig, cow, horse, and other appurtenances of headship. When a woman marries the eldest son of a house, she is taken home to the paternal roof, and, on the death of the father, becomes mistress, to the exclusion of the mother-in-law, whose reign ceases at once.

As it was now late, the good people of this hut offered me a mattress in another room; and I passed the night luxuriously in clean linen, and with my clothes off, for the first and only time during a long Russian journey. Where the night was spent by my young Russian fellow-traveller I cannot tell. In the morning, when we were about to start, he had vanished with his traps, no one knew whither. After waiting at the station some time, I went back to inquire at

my host's. One of the daughters met me at the door with sparkling eyes, as pretty a country beauty as I had seen any where in Russia. To my question she answered, "I will tell you; you are a good fellow. He cannot leave me yet, and will remain here a day or two. But don't say to any body where he is. God give you a safe journey! Good-by." Wherewith she vanished. Already my fellow-travellers were grumbling at a long delay, so I had little difficulty in persuading them to travel on without him.

I may as well tell—since I know it—the sequel to this little history. Nine months afterwards, I was stepping out of a railway carriage at Moscow, when I met my old companion of the hut; he seized my portmanteau with one hand, and with the other he dragged me to the gate, tumbled me with himself into a prelotka (a small open carriage), and directed the driver where to go. "You are going to my house," he said, "to meet an old acquaintance, and to be our guest while you remain in Moscow. Don't say no; it *shall* be so." On arriving at his house, a small one, but very respectable, I was agreeably surprised to meet the beauty of the hut, who came forward as his wife, looking as happy as man could desire. She had just finished a music-lesson, was dressed very neatly, and she did the honours of the house quite creditably while I stayed.

"You remember telling me on that awful journey in March last," said the young Russian when we sat up together, "how they married for love in England, and not for money; how women were not there slaves.

to men, and so forth? Well, I saw this girl that very night about to be sacrificed to a brute. I thought her good and pure; and you know she is beautiful. So I began that night to love her, told her so, and told her father so. I could not tear myself away for three days; and at the end of that time I determined I would have her, let it cost me what it might. So when I got to Moscow I called on her master, the baron; offered to buy her; and begged him not to allow her to be married to the bad man whom the steward had appointed. But," he continued, taking me by both hands, "you had been before me there. He told me that he had seen an Englishman who so represented the case, that he had given orders for the stoppage of that marriage."

"Yes," I said, "I did see him, and found him a kind-hearted gentleman, quite unaware of some of his steward's pranks. He granted my request at once, and in my presence sent a letter off to stop the marriage."

"But," he said, "that is not all. He refused to sell her; said that he knew the family well, that the old man had charge of him while a boy, and once protected his life at some risk. He asked me what I was, and what interest I had in the girl. I replied, that I wanted to marry her. 'Then,' said he, 'the whole family shall have its freedom as soon as we can make out the necessary papers.' That is all done long ago. The rascally steward is discharged, and I am to fill his place."

Again I turn to the snowy winter journey, of which a part has been already described. The track on the fourth day was worse than any we had yet encountered, being more cut up with traffic. But we had good cattle, and one man less to carry; so, although we were upset more than once, we did not make less than our usual progress. Once the kibitka turned over in a deep valley of snow, and the passengers were tossed together into a confused and struggling mass. My breath was nearly choked out of me by the weight of a fat Russian baron, whose thumb I was obliged to bite as he was digging his hands into my face, before he could be induced to tumble off. After scrambling, as usual, out at the top door, and to the track again, we found the whole wreck beyond remedy by our unassisted powers. Fortunately, however, a long line of sledges with goods from Rastov fair, being just in front of us, the poor peasants who were attached as drivers and guards, although they had plenty of troublesome work on their own hands, came back, and by main force lifted us out of the hole. It was some time before we were so far righted as to be able to go on; and then when we were making up lost time, and overtook our friends with their sledges, numbering probably a hundred in a long line on the one solitary track, it became necessary to pass them if we would not be kept at a snail's pace for many hours. But the passing was not easy. The whole line must draw close to one side, and in some cases into the soft snow, and this the men for a long time refused to do. It was a difficult job, involving risk to some, and the

road was theirs as well as ours. The Russian baron, who was one of us, at length lost all temper, and began to swear as only a Russian can. Being cold and hungry, exhausted and much shaken, he was anxious to get to some shelter, especially as night was now closing. Oaths having no effect, he lost the last glimmer of polish, and came out the born Tartar that he was. Dragging the cudgel from my hand, he began belabouring with all his might the men and horses, dealing blows right and left, and compelling the men to draw up to one side as fast as we came up. For an hour this lasted, before we had passed all the sledges.

"There, you canaille!" he cried as he struck. "Take that! Give the road, you lazy vermin! Make room, you pigs! I am a baron, don't you see? A friend of the governor's! Sons of dogs! Defilement of the earth! Your mothers are beasts!" and so forth.

This was his gentlest style, while the blows fell in a shower. Forty or fifty men submitted to all this, grumbled, but cowed; they took the blows and insults of this one man as dogs take their masters' kicks; they were serfs, he was a baron. After he had recovered his seat and his breath, and had wiped the perspiration from his head, he turned to me, and asked, with an air of national pride,

"What do you say to that, me lort?"

"I say, that had you struck the poorest of my countrymen in that manner, they would either have boxed you into a jelly, or they would have tied you

to a sledge until they reached the first town, and then given you up to a magistrate for an assault."

"O, as to that, I should soon get away from a magistrate. A little money would soon do that."

"Indeed! I can tell you that your whole estate, with a dozen like it, would not buy one of our magistrates."

This assertion only caused an incredulous laugh, and a remark from the baron that he could buy any country magistrates in Russia for fifty kopecks (eighteenpence).

The baron referred to was a tall, stout man, well acquainted with the French and German languages as well as the Russ, and apparently, also, with the literature of England. He had read, in French and Russian, translations of the works of the chief English novelists and poets of the present century. He spoke with enthusiasm of the English government and people; and he recited Russian compositions, which, in the time of Nicholas, and at St. Petersburg, would have insured him a free passage to Siberia. He told me he had just manumitted a great portion of his serfs, and was on his way to the two capitals to sell his estate and leave the country; or, failing in that, to lot his land, and bring it into proper cultivation. The great curse of the country, he thought, were the priests—a lazy, ignorant pack; immoral, drunken, and filthy in the interior, polished and crafty in the capitals. The emancipation of the serfs was nothing without the abolition of the priestly influence. The

state finances, he said, were in a terribly low state. Why did not the emperor play Henry the Eighth, seize upon the numerous and enormously wealthy monasteries and churches, and melt down the gold and silver lying useless in their coffers, or covering their altars and pretended saints? My name not being asked, the baron and the others called me Lort Palmerston. My baron worshipped Palmerston; but he said it was "Henry the Eighth and Oliver Cromwell *they* wanted." In opinions and character this fellow-traveller was one of a large class that may one day play a cudgel for what it considers Russian regeneration; a man polite to excess, but, "when scraped, a Tartar," as the poor sledge-drivers who had pulled us out of the pit could witness. This baron's son, a young man of twenty-two, was with us, already proud to employ English oaths, and talk of "box," besides being so unpleasantly addicted to rather practical jokes, that on one occasion I was obliged to give him a little unexpected practice in the "noble science," for which his father most politely, and I think sincerely, thanked me.

An officer of infantry, wounded at Inkerman, and now invalided, was another of our party. He was very civil to me, and asked many questions about the English army and navy systems. Of Inkerman, "Ah!" he said, "I was there, and received my wound from an English officer's revolver. Poor fellow! I forgave him; it was his last barrel, and the last shot he ever fired; but he hurled the empty pistol at one of those who were pressing on

him, so that he knocked the fellow down; but the next moment he fell, pierced with balls and bayonets. My God! how these few men did fight and die, surprised by a whole army!". He related what, indeed, I had often heard in Russia, that all the detail of attack was carefully planned in St. Petersburg by the Emperor Nicholas, who was perfectly convinced of its complete success. And it would most certainly have sufficed, had that handful of Englishmen but known when it was overmatched. "But this we could not make them understand," he said; "so in time the French came, in overwhelming masses, and our troops were forced to retire. English stupidity lost us the best chance we had during that war." When the express courier reached St. Petersburg with the first news of that defeat, and the entire failure of the carefully-devised plan that was to drive the allies into the sea, the emperor, scouting the rumour of defeat arrived the day before, received the messenger—an officer of rank—as the bearer of joyful tidings. Something, however, in the officer's looks betokened any thing but joy, and in breathless silence from the assembled court, the emperor stalked up to the man, seized him by both shoulders, and said with evident effort and concentrated emotion, "Say! speak! Is it victory?"

"My liege, I have instructions. There is the despatch!"

"Speak one word: Victory!—quick."

"Nay, sire, I am distressed to say it is defeat," replied the officer, and hung his head.

"Liar!" roared the emperor; and with his whole force he flung the messenger of evil to the other side of the room, and walked into the adjoining cabinet with the unopened despatch in his hand. How far this scene, repeated again by my friend the soldier, is true, I cannot tell; but as it is said to have had many witnesses, so I know it is widely credited among men likely to be right as to such matters.

The only other traveller in our kibitka was a Russianised German: one of a class very common in Russia, and, as a class, inquisitive, crafty, unscrupulous, hating the English with what soul they have, cheating and injuring them when they have the power. Russia is overrun with Germans of this sort, who are to be found in all places except where sound knowledge and honourable dealing are essential. Nearly all the apothecaries are such Germans, and the prices they sell drugs at are audacious. They get to be stewards, and then woe to the poor peasants. They largely import German girls, who are preferred to Russian by the dissolute. They are confectioners, factors, watchmakers, sausage- and ham-dealers, organ- and knife-grinders, any thing. When they first invaded the country they were called "neimitz," or dummies, because, unable to speak the language, they talked only by signs. The army itself is overrun with greedy German officers and doctors: too commonly men who, while poor, will submit to any degradation; but who, when they get up in the world a little, are fastidious and proud. The Russians hate them with good cause, because they are

cruel, extortionate, tyrannical, and practically useless. Many of the nobility and gentry are married to German women; for the Russian women are wan, and not usually good-looking. The German wives exert the influence of their husbands in advancing the interests of all their poor relations. Let me illustrate this by a short history, which will show also the state of Russian serfdom under German management.

General R. was a pure Russian, but having in his youth been employed as a diplomatist in England and elsewhere, he became so deeply sensible of the political degradation of his countrymen, and of his own responsibility in relation to his serfs, that when he returned to Russia he obtained the emperor's permission to retire from public life, and devote himself, assisted by his wife (also of an old Russian family), to the task of improving the condition of the ten thousand serfs on his estates. These estates were extensive, had a splendid soil, and happened to be situated in a genial climate. The general himself went to live in the midst of his people, looked into their wants, established schools and churches, as well as factories, corn-mills, sugar-works, adopted agricultural improvements, and increased his wealth. He was the first to set up a cotton-mill in Russia, in order to employ profitably his people and time during the long lazy winter months formerly spent in perfect idleness. The fortunate serfs increased their allotments; the sound of whip or stick was never heard; traders came far distances to trade in the thriving valleys of R., and their produce brought the

best prices in the large town, distant only one hundred versts. In all disputes the general himself was judge and jury; he was adviser and friend in all difficulties. Incorrigible delinquents were punished by being sent off the estate to work, according to the common custom, under other owners, on the "obrok," and on this estate no heavier punishment could be inflicted. He built a country-house, a copy from some English gentleman's seat that he had seen and liked; surrounded it with gardens and a park; erected farm-houses on a large scale; imported implements, cattle, and experienced overseers: and when his barns and coffers were full, and all went well with him and his, he died, beloved and almost worshipped by the men to whom his life had been a blessing. Ten years after the old general's death, I inhabited a wing of his mansion for a twelvemonth, so that I know well what I am relating. Evidences were around me daily, on all sides, of the good that was done, and the cause of the change that followed.

"Ah!" said the old Russian overseer of the cotton-mill, "you should have come in the old general's time. Then we were men; now we are beasts. Then we were all rich; now we are skinned and robbed of our very flesh. Then we could eat beef; now we cannot get enough of 'casha' to keep us alive. Look at me. Am I not as thin as a ghost? The year the general died, I weighed fifteen stone; I had six hundred roubles, saved from rearing poultry, pigs, growing flax, and getting presents from the master.

It's all gone—or," said he whispering, "they think so. Some of it is buried where they never shall clutch it. Ah! the 'neimitz' came then. They ruined the estate."

"Who is the 'neimitz'?"

"Who indeed? There came here once an Englishman as superintendent of these works; I liked him. When the men first went to pay their respects to him, the poor starved-looking beings told their tale in their faces, but poured out also their grievances before him. He said that he was only come to superintend the mechanical processes, that with their social relations he had nothing to do; but whatever was in his power he would do to make them comfortable. In the mean time he gave them a day's holiday, but our German steward forbade them to take it; 'That,' he said to the Englishman, 'is against all rules. But come,' said the sneak, 'we can make things comfortable by playing into one another's hands. Come to my house to-night and take a glass of schnaps, and we shall talk the matter over; in the mean time I have ordered the engines and works to go on to-morrow as usual.' The Englishman turned him out of the room, and then got the keys of the factory and locked out the work-people, so that they could not go to work. The frightened serfs waited about the doors. The man who gave the keys to the English superintendent was flogged by the steward. On the same day the Englishman doubled his wages. But he could not fight against a fellow who might send what tales he pleased to a master in the capital, six hundred

miles away; so he gave up the contest and left us to our wretchedness."

It grieves me to tell what I learnt here, and what I saw. The old general had left a son in the army, who succeeded to the family inheritance. The son, immediately on the old man's death, married a very pretty German adventuress whom he had met in one of the more questionable saloons of Moscow. A daughter was born to them; and soon afterwards the husband was seized with a fit and died in a ball-room, also at Moscow. The child being then but three years old, the lady's brother was appointed trustee and administrator of the estate until she came of age —that is to say, was seventeen years old or married. This man's whole effort was to enrich himself by exhausting the wealth of the place during his trusteeship. A German steward was put in, and every possible thing was done to grind substance out of the poor peasants. The widow, her brother, and daughter lived at Moscow in a round of gaiety and dissipation, never visiting the estates. The steward was becoming very rich. Large sums were being sent to Moscow out of mortgages effected; and instead of the old happiness and contentment amongst the serfs, there was an utter bitterness of destitution. The works were not kept in repair nor properly managed, and the people, become lazy and sullen, were forced to keep the mill going day and night in order to keep up the original rate of production. At four o'clock on Sunday afternoon the work began, and never stopped till Sunday next at nine A.M., when six hours were allowed

for church-going. A double set of hands, working alternately, kept the machinery in constant motion: one set working for six hours, while the other set lay sleeping in corners. A bell was rung at the end of each six hours, when the sleepers rose up, and those who had been working lay down. This went on night and day. Married women brought their babies to the factory, where I saw them stuck in cotton baskets, where mothers bred, fed, slept, worked, and did all manner of things in the grinding din of work —morality, decency, or cleanliness, impossible and far-off dreams. Indeed, these people had approached more nearly to the condition of brutes than I had thought possible for men and women; what I saw here and heard elsewhere did, let me own it, turn my heart to a strong prejudice against the Russian Germans. This widow of the last male of the R.'s was a German; her brother the trustee was a German; his steward was a German; and all of them were idle and rapacious voluptuaries. The poor girl when she comes of age will find the noble estate left by her Russian grandfather and father ruined irretrievably, and she will be one Russian more hating the "neimitz." I have no doubt whatever that, should a popular outbreak take place and the pent-up fury of the peasantry find vent, the first burst of retribution and vengeance will fall on this part of the population.

Even the neimitz who was our travelling companion did not allow us to reach our journey's end until he had played a revengeful trick on one of us,

which made it necessary for us to decide between turning him out of our kibitka, or carrying him on, bound, as a prisoner to Moscow. We turned him out, and on the morning of the eighth day of a perilous and fatiguing journey, reached Moscow without him.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT NATIONAL RAILWAY LINE.

On a good Russian map of Russia, between Petersburg and Moscow, there is a red line drawn. That is the line of the Great National Railway. It is almost straight; it has no curves, no tunnels, in its whole distance of six hundred and twenty versts. It was, when made, a great deal longer than that; the government was charged seven hundred and twenty versts, and the line shrank to its present length after the contractors and officials interested were all paid. Thus the length of this line has always been in the Russian archives matter of doubt. Several persons, however, got their free passage to Siberia for counting the versts as seven hundred and twenty. There are also verst-posts now put up, and the number of these is a hundred less.

The Emperor Nicholas was not pleased with the plans first drawn for this line. There were too many twists and curves made, to accommodate towns lying about the route, to facilitate the traffic of the country between the two capitals. This was not his aim; he had his own use for a railway. It was a way to convey soldiers swiftly and directly to and from Mos-

cow. The straighter the line, the better for this purpose; so he took his pencil, drew it straight across the map from point to point between the two cities, and said, "Make the railway there." His line, of course, was adopted; and thus Nicholas was the off-hand engineer of a great railway, distinguished from all others by the fact that it does not pass through, or very near, any town but one in its whole course. The immense tract of country lying on both sides between Moscow and Petersburg has been, therefore, very little the better for railway communication: more particularly as not one branch line has been formed in connection with the main line.

When the line was finished, it was found that there would not be full work for it as a military road; so there was granted, as a great favour to the inhabitants of the two extreme cities, liberty to travel up and down it. After this they built magnificent refreshment-stations and engine-depôts at convenient distances; and now this is one of the finest, safest, best-arranged, and most comfortable travelling-lines in the world. The speed of travelling is limited to twenty miles an hour. The shortest stoppage is for ten minutes, allowing plenty of time to drink a cup of tea and smoke a cigarette; but at each of the principal stations the train stops for half an hour. Hot well-cooked dinners, breakfasts, and suppers, served by clean well-dressed waiters, are always ready. There is plenty of time to eat, and the price is not very high. Again, in travelling, a first- or second-class passenger can walk from one end of the

train to the other. The carriages are excellent, and built on the American plan; with a passage up the centre, seats at right angles to the passage, doors in the ends of the cars, and no division any where. The guard has an assistant at the door of every carriage. The Russian third-class carriages are superior to the English second, and the second-class are quite equal to our first. Smoking is universal at all the railway stations,—even the ladies accept offers of cigars. The fares are, between Moscow and Petersburg (four hundred and eleven miles): third-class, ten roubles (thirty shillings); second, thirteen roubles (thirty-nine shillings); first, seventeen roubles (fifty-one shillings). As a night has always to be passed in the carriages, each passenger brings two pillows: the first-class pillows are encased in silk, the second in calico, the third in any thing. These pillows add cushions to the seats, and support the back by day, and form by night excellent extemporised beds. The Russians make a journey to and from Moscow an affair of pleasure, sleep and eat alternately, gormandising at all stations where refreshments can be had; not crowding them,—that is impossible, the rooms being so large as to accommodate from six hundred to eight hundred persons at once. The passengers do strict justice to the good things on the tables, find fault freely, and order what they require as if they were at home in a good hotel. After the gutta-percha pork-pies, mahogany cakes, and sawdust sandwiches, bolted standing in the English refreshment-rooms, it is pleasant to sit down comfortably when one is tired

and hungry—napkin on knee—to a half-hour's quiet discussion of a well-cooked meal. Beef, lamb, mutton, vegetables, fowl, game, potatoes, fish, cutlets, cheese, and dessert, are served by civil waiters, in black clothes and white cravats, at the small charge of one rouble (three shillings) each. One can also dine very well for half this sum at the side-table.

A place called Bullagonie is the centre station: there the up- and down-trains meet on opposite lines, and pour out their motley freights into the grand dining-saloon, to the number of four hundred from each train. Officers of all grades emerge in dashing uniforms; fine ladies in silks and brocades; lacqueys and attendants on the same in parti-coloured liveries; fat, greasy, long-bearded Russian merchants, their wives and daughters sparkling with rings and pins, chains, bracelets, and all manner of jewelry; German stewards, Turks and Greeks, Tartars, Circassians, Armenians, Jews, French, German, and English travellers for pleasure or for business; English and American engineers and mechanics; Russians, of divers provinces, with beards and without, in long caftans, long boots, long hair, with long faces and short purses; Russian women without hats or bonnets, their heads bound in handkerchiefs; and a host of nondescript creatures, which appear to belong to nothing known on earth or under the earth. They dine in twenty minutes, and then fall to smoking and to drinking beer, tea, spirits, wine—champagne among the rest—until the second bell sounds. There are three bells, with an interval of five minutes be-

tween each ringing: the Russians cross themselves at the second bell, take the last puff, throw the rest of the cigar away, and then leisurely saunter each to his carriage. The last bell having sounded, gently and slowly the trains take their departure,—one to Moscow and the other to Petersburg. There is no hurry, no crushing, squeezing, running, or losing seats; yet sometimes a stranger will get out at the wrong side, get into the wrong train, and be fairly on the way back to his starting-point before he finds out his mistake.

A rather curious case of this kind happened on one of my journeys to Moscow. An old lavishnick, or shopkeeper of the peasant class, was my *vis-à-vis* in a second-class carriage. He might be sixty years of age; and, with his long white beard and hair, broad face and forehead, large hooked nose, calm and wondering eyes, loose caftan, broad belt, and long wide boots, he looked quite Abrahamic. Evidently he had never been on rails before. When we started from Petersburg he reverently crossed himself three times, and then gave himself up to whatever might come, with patient faith. As we proceeded he became astonished at the awful speed of twenty miles an hour, and I had to undergo a deal of cross-questioning: "Was I Neimitz?" "No." "An Americansky?" "No." "Then you are an Anglichan?" "Yes."

"Have you iron roads in England?"

"Yes—many."

"How many?"

"One almost to every town and village."

A long pause ensued after this answer; it took time to get it down.

"And do they go as fast as we are going now?"

"Some three times faster."

"O, sir, you are joking with an old man."

Of course he did not believe me. When we got to Bullagonie he got out like the rest, and in the dining-saloon I saw him meet a friend who belonged to the Moscow train: they kissed and shook hands over and over again, and then sat down to eat and talk and drink, all of which they did with a relish. When the second bell rang they got up with the rest, and in earnest conversation took their way to our train, got in, and sat down side by side. I found my new friend even more primitive than the other. As the train started the crossing was resumed, and then I had to undergo another fire of questions. Endeavouring to amuse these patriarchs as well as I could, the time passed until we were approaching a station two hours from Bullagonie.

"How different," said one, "is this from the old road to Moscow! It took seven days and about a hundred horses. Now we do it without horses in twenty hours."

"Yes," said the other; "and see how fast it goes with such a heavy load. I cannot understand how the steam drags it along. This gentleman says that in England the steam is stronger, and they go sixty versts an hour; but it is a romance."

"It is wonderful; but"—and a bright idea seemed

to come into the speaker's head—"the most wonderful thing to me is, that here I am going to Petersburg and you to Moscow, and yet here we are in one carriage. Railways are wonderful things. I cannot understand it."

There was general laughter; and the simple old man, who had spoken in good time, was put out at the station, there to wait the next day's train. Many tales of this kind are told of the bewildered notions of the peasantry concerning railways.

The country through which this railway runs is a weary waste of bog and stunted wood. The eye and the mind sicken at the eternal sameness of the dreary prospect, as hour after hour passes and there is no change for the better. A dozen or two apparently of mud heaps—in reality of wooden huts—in the centre of a barren plain, stand for a village. A stranger might pass many such without knowing them to be human habitations: beavers are better housed. If we look narrowly, we may perceive that the ground for some distance around these places has been scratched over, and that the vegetation is of rye and beet, struggling out of the hungry earth. The want of fences, trees, parks, animal or human life, makes it difficult to believe that such growths represent cultivation. The principal stations are tastefully surrounded with gardens and trees, and have in their neighbourhood excellent dwelling-houses for the superintendents and workmen engaged in the engine-depôt; but the moment we pass these oases, the desert begins again.

The Tver station is the most important on the line, for here is the navigable commencement of that long river, the Volga, from which comes much wealth of grain, flax, hemp, timber, and all kinds of raw produce, not forgetting the sturgeon, and, to a Russian, its delicious "eckra," or caviare. At Tver, also, the traveller by rail may see, as he passes, two or three immense cotton-mills, suggestive of protective duties, with dear calicoes and prints, rich machine-makers and agents, sallow cheeks of peasant boys and girls, condemned to night work and day slavery. The Great National Railway Line has never paid the government a single copeck. It has, however, made large fortunes for several American contractors, who, for a fixed sum per verst, furnish engines and carriages, and keep the line in repair. Their contract is now about to terminate, but it has been of so extraordinary a character as to make it one of the curiosities of Russia. Nicholas himself always recommended strangers to see the American railway contract, as one of his greatest curiosities. It must be said, however, that if the American contractors were cute enough to make an amazing bargain, they have kept the line in splendid order; and up to this moment it is not too much to say that there are not better carriages, finer engines, and a better plant in the world, than are to be found on the Petersburg and Moscow Railway.

CHAPTER IV.

AMONG THE HORSEKEEPERS AT MOSCOW.

BUT my travel now extends more than five hundred English miles beyond the railway; and at Moscow I must give myself up to the tender mercies of yeamshicks, tarantasses, hack-horses, indescribable and unknown roads, filthy inns, and abominable station-houses. In an evil hour I had made a business-engagement in the south of Russia, which would require more than twelve months' residence on the spot; and as the climate and country were said to be fine, and a first-class residence, with other good things, were promised, I took my whole family with me, determined to make a pleasure-trip of it, if possible. So, I had with me a wife and half-a-dozen young children; also a handy man, who had just arrived from England seeking work, and who went to assist in the practical part of the business I had undertaken. This man turned out an invaluable friend for a rough journey, and an excellent comrade in all outdoor sports. He had broad shoulders, and the most powerful arms I ever saw. The only difficulty I had with him was to keep him from using

his arms like sledge-hammers on Russians of every degree, for real or imaginary outrages on our dignity as true-born Englishmen. And as he did not understand one word of Russ, he was constantly the prey of false imaginations.

A journey of eight hundred versts in Russia is an undertaking of some risk for able-bodied men; but if females and children are added, there is need of more than ordinary care in deciding on the best method of taking it. So, in an English lodging-house, on the second day of my arrival in Moscow, I held after-dinner consultation with four or five experienced Englishmen, who had accomplished similar journeys. Each was loud on behalf of the particular plan he had himself adopted. One was clearly in favour of the government diligence as far as it went; but as this involved constant travelling without stopping for five nights and days, at a cost of twenty-five roubles each, on the chaussée; and after that, two hundred versts across the country, without stopping for rest,—the children might probably fall sick, the women be knocked-up, and we might be left in some outlandish desert to recover health or strength. I was against that method of travel.

"Bargain, then, with a yeamshick to take you right through, all the way, with one set of horses. You can stop when you like."

"Ay," said another, "and you'll have to stop when you don't like, and as long as he may choose, to rest the horses. You'll be twenty days on the road."

"That," I said, "is not a promising method of travel."

"Then get a padaroshni, and take the free post. So you can go forward or stop to recruit as you are inclined."

"Never do that," said another; "you will be detained at the stations hours and hours, waiting for horses, in spite of your padaroshni. It will take you as long to get to your journey's end as if you travelled with one set, and it will cost three times the money. I stick by the government diligence."

"Come," I said, to my helping hand, "let us go and see what bargain we can make with the yeamshicks. I would rather make the journey leisurely; twenty days is certainly too much, but let us hear what they say."

Off we went to the quarter where the posting establishments of these people are situated. There was no difficulty in finding it; but as I crossed the bridge and went down into the low quarter sacred to yeamshicks and their teams, I felt inclined to cross myself, like a good Russian. It was getting dark; the streets, houses, and people had a villanous, black, hang-dog look. I could almost have turned back, but it was too late. We looked like customers, and, before we could turn round, were surrounded by some twenty or thirty rival yeamshicks, who rushed out upon us from yawning twisted wooden gateways and small tumble-down houses.

"I want two troikas to go as far as Karkoff. Where are your horses and conveyances?"

"Here—this way, baron."

And I was good-naturedly, but with firm decision, dragged through a dismal archway into a dirty court-yard, surrounded by sheds propped at all sorts of angles upon wooden posts. In these sheds were horses by the score, cattle that currycomb had never scratched nor wisp of straw defiled. By this time fifty drivers had assembled; and as nothing pleases a Russian so well as a good stiff bargain, I began my offers at the lowest figure.

"For two tarantasses, six horses, and straw for each to Karkoff, in ten days; if more time is taken, a reduction of ten roubles per day—forty roubles."

"Baron! my lord! your excellency! say one hundred roubles and fifteen days."

"No; forty."

"Go, then."

"No; forty-five."

"Eighty. Horses like deer and excellent carriages for eighty!"

This went on until I got to sixty roubles, then to seventy.

"Now hear my last word. I'll give seventy if ——" Here the contending parties having, as they imagined, brought me to the point, began to pull me hither and thither, each that he might secure me to himself. I was first pulled to this side, then lifted to the other, and my hat fell off in the confusion. My handy man with the strong arms had been jostled to the outside of the circle, not understanding a word of our discourse; but when he saw, as he thought, vio-

lent hands laid on me, he sprang among the fifty drivers, and a right and left hand blow from his sledge-hammers sent down two who had hold of me to bite the dust. Before I could stop him, down went another two: "There, you muck varmint, I'll handle you! I'll larn you to lay hands on a freeborn Englishman!" His eye lighting on the spoke of an old broken cart-wheel, in another moment he was flourishing it high in the air and chasing the poor astonished fellows round the yard. "Now," he said, panting as he came up to me, "let's bolt, gov'nur; t'road's clear."

I thought it high time to escape, and we both made a rush to the street, but just in time to fall into the hands of four police. My handy man dropped his cudgel in presence of the cutlasses, and amid the yells and shouts of a great crowd, which, however, did not follow us, we were marched through the streets to the police-office.

One of our captors questioned me on the way; but I prudently replied in their official language, by simply putting a rouble into the hands of each soldier. That explained every thing. When we got into the presence of the district magistrate, an officer in blue clothes and brass buttons (a chinovnick), I made no reply to any of his questions, but only shook my head, while several of the yeamshicks making their appearance with bruised heads and faces, told their tale: how that they were quietly bargaining with me, and had nearly concluded, when that mad Englishman

rushed amongst them with a great iron bar and inflicted all the wounds his excellency saw.

"Where is the iron bar? Soldiers, why did you not bring the iron bar with you?"

"There was no iron bar, your honour, and we saw no fighting. These two Englishmen, who can speak no Russian (that is value for one rouble), were quietly leaving the yard (good for another). We would not have brought them here, but these pigs of yeamshicks were like to devour them (well worth a third), so we took charge of them for safety." (Value received: four roubles.)

"Here, Vasilia, tell the interpreter to come from the Stone Cabinet;" and to my astonishment there entered one of the guests I had left at the dinner-table.

He looked at us a moment, as a perfect stranger would, and turning to the magistrate, said, "What is your pleasure?"

"Be pleased to ask them how this affair happened."

"I am astonished to find you here; but tell me what it means," said the interpreter.

I told him plainly and truly, and said that as I did not want to pass a night in the office, if ten roubles would be of any use——"O!" he said, "that is the very thing to settle the whole question; give them to me." After getting the roubles, he turned to the magistrate, and I heard him explaining the case exactly as I told it. The magistrate laughed heartily at my handy man's mistake. "But why pretend ignorance of the language here?" he said to me.

"I was afraid my tongue might get us into trouble with imperfect Russ. But had I known you better, I should have told all at once."

"Come here," he said to the yeamshicks. "Ye sons of dogs, here are four roubles from this gentleman to heal your faces, but take care you don't come hither again with such a lying tale about a mad Englishman and an iron bar. Begone, pigs!" They received the money and bowed themselves out, evidently well pleased with this morsel of justice.

On the way home, I asked the English interpreter what was done with the other six roubles?

"Hush!" he said; "I suppose they have neglected to give back the change."

"Shall I run back and ask for it?"

"I think you had better not. Let well alone."

But, my day's adventures with the police were not over. No sooner had I returned to my lodgings, than I found fresh trouble. My wife had laid down a diamond-ring on the washing-stand in her room when washing her hands, and had left it there. It was gone; so was a Russian girl, a servant of the house, who was the only person who had been in the room. Now, the ring being a favourite, and received on a momentous occasion, my wife was resolved to get it back, and she had taken instant measures for the purpose, just as she would have done in England: forgetting for the moment that she was in Russia, where no stolen property ever *is* got back. She had found some body to show her the nearest police-office, had gone there, and had given information of her

loss. Her statement had been taken down on a large document, which it had taken an hour to write; and this she had signed. After her return to the house two police-officers, who had come to make minute investigation of the premises, had asked and received food and vodka. They had also written out another long document, which both the landlord and my wife had to sign, and then they had gone away, saying that she should have to appear to-morrow again, and be reëxamined by the chief of the police. This was the state of things I found, on coming in. My wife was beginning to cool, and to perceive also that it was one thing to lose a diamond-ring in Russia, and quite another thing to hope to get it back. I took my hat without saying a word, and made for the police-office as fast as an "isvostchick" could take me, with the pleasant sense of another ten roubles gone. Making my way to the chief officer on duty, I said, "Pray excuse me, your honour. My wife has been here about a diamond-ring?"

"O yes, that affair is all in hand; we have taken two depositions already, and to-morrow we shall take a third. After that we shall want your testimony about the ring being in your wife's possession, and a description of it: where it was made, and its value. We shall then begin to look out for the girl."

"You are very kind. There is no doubt of your zeal in the affair, but I am come to say it is all a mistake on my wife's part. She has made a very unlucky mistake about this ring."

"How so, sir? After all the trouble she has put

us to, she has not lost the ring? A fine story! But the case must go on."

"Yes, she is quite aware of, and sorry for, the great trouble you have had; and there are ten roubles as a recompense for that trouble, and there are two for the clerks. She will take it as a great favour if you will do no more in the matter. Just let it pass as the mistake of a woman. Now, will you be so kind as to stop all further proceedings in this matter?"

"Why—ah!—yes; you see it is against rule this. But as the papers have not gone before the chief, it can be done, I daresay. I am glad you have found the ring. You shall hear no more of it. Adieu!"

We had very nearly been in for six months' waiting in Moscow, and endless worry and expense, without the most remote chance of recovering the stolen trinket.

CHAPTER V.

FROM MOSCOW TO TULA.

I HAVE a journey from Moscow southward of eight hundred versts before me; and the sooner I am off the better, for have I not, for no fault of my own, been twice in the hands of the police, and has it not cost me in two days four pounds for bribery? A long land-journey in Russia with one's wife and children is a thing to flinch from: but I desired to see Russia to its innermost; I desired also, yet more, to fulfil my engagements, and having already come six hundred versts upon the way, I could not, as an Englishman, turn back. Having decided, therefore, on the "padaroshni" and the free post route, I hastened to the governor-general's office, but was told that a padaroshni was not needed for that road.

"Go to the free post-office, show your passport, and you will get horses and tarantasses as far as you may require on the main road."

At the office referred to, which was at the other end of Moscow, I opened a negotiation for six horses and two conveyances. They had a fixed price of four kopecks, or three-halfpence, per horse per verst

(a verst being about two-thirds of a mile) as far as Tula, then of three kopecks to Orel, and after that to Kharkov, or Charkoff, two-and-a-half kopecks, or rather less than a penny. For each of the tarantasses the charge was five roubles, or about fifteen and sixpence; to which had to be added ten roubles for road-money or tolls—in all the cost was about two-and-twenty pounds. After travelling thus on the main road, I was to leave it and proceed as best I could, for another one hundred and eighty versts, across the country, with roads or without. By adopting this plan I could travel at what rate I chose, as the conveyances were my own for the time being.

In the bottom then of two tarantasses we packed our trunks, portmanteaus, and carpet-bags as smoothly as possible, covered them first with straw, and then with feather-beds and many pillows, rugs, and blankets; while bread, tea, sugar, sardines, brandy, wine, pistol-case, blunderbuss (belonging to our friend Harry), fur-coats, cloaks, felt-boots with legs reaching up to the hips, and a mass of small miscellaneous luggage for the younger travellers, filled up the corners, or were hung round the inside of the vehicles, and boxes were strapped on the outside with strong ropes.

We saw the last of Russian civilisation as we passed out by the gate at twelve A.M., and dashed on at full stretch, changing horses at every sixteen or eighteen versts. Station after station passed and no rest from the bumping and jostling; but the road

here was first-rate, and the arrangements with the beds and pillows turned out famously. Let no man, still less woman or child, travel in a tarantass without such safety-breaks between the bones and the hard wood. We stopped at four o'clock, went into a station-house, asked for the urn, and dined on tea, sardines, and bread. Then off again at the same speed. Sundry bottles of milk-and-water, with more solid victual, served for our family supper, eaten as we ran. After this, the children sang themselves to sleep, while Harry and I, fortified with brandy-and-water and pistols, mounted guard on separate boxes by the drivers, to be ready against mischance during the night. All went well during the small hours, except that watchful Harry fell from his box into a ditch. We had to stop and pick him out. Soon afterwards he nodded his fur-cap into the road, and when we were obliged to pull up and search for it, attacked the driver for having knocked it off.

At three o'clock, we lumbered into a town called Serpuchov, passing, as we entered, a large cotton-mill lighted up with gas, and even at that hour in full work. Here occurred one of those unforeseen troubles which mar Russian travelling, and bring out the inventive money-making powers of the native. It was December. "The little winter" had brought ice and snow; thaw following, had melted these; then frost enough had set in again to harden the roads, without making the rivers safe for crossing. Now, it happens that the river Ova, which rises in the south country, near Koursk, and falls into the Volga near Nishni

Novgorod, running through or by this town of Serpuchov, here lay across our path. But the pontoon bridge had been as usual removed for the winter; the river was enough frozen to prevent boats or barges from crossing, and so we were told that here we must wait two or three days, until the ice could be crossed safely by horses and carriages. More than a hundred travelling equipages, thus brought to a stand-still, were drawn up on the banks, and every hour more were arriving. All the inns and lodging-houses were filled by the grumblings of river- and ice-bound travellers. Bread, tea, and all the necessaries of life, including lodgings, had risen in price four hundred per cent. Even a samovar, or urn of hot water, could not be had under a rouble. By six o'clock we had managed to obtain one of these excellent articles, and got a capital breakfast out of our own stores, the breakfast-room being the two tarantasses placed together. We had come too late to find other shelter, and many about us were in a like position. The delay continued until ten o'clock, when the cold was becoming unendurable. Help then appeared in the person of a very well-dressed, polite, and civil gentleman, a baron and landholder of the neighbourhood. He took a philanthropic interest in our condition, bewailed with us, and sympathised with us to our hearts' content, but he said, "It must be endured!"

"What!" I cried, "two or three days starving here in the cold with women and children?"

"Yes, here at Serpuchov the river won't bear for that time. Now, at my place, twenty versts down,

the river is already quite firm all the way across. If you were all *there*, you could get over easily, and then 'cross country a few versts to the main road."

"But this is much better than waiting here! And how are we to get to your place?"

"Ah!" he said, "if my time would permit, I should be happy to show the way; I have spoken to some others, and they are imploring me to go."

"Well, then, let me implore you also. But"—and I hesitated to ask the question of a baron and landowner—"how much will you expect for your trouble?"

"O," he said, "you insult me now by such a question! Am I a Moscovsky dog, or a Chinovnick, to take money for an act of kindness? A little for my men, who must assist, is all it will cost."

"Well, let us go, and with all my heart I thank you for delivering us out of this difficulty."

By the time a bargain had been made with the drivers for fresh horses, and another guinea paid for each conveyance (because my posting receipt did not include this deviation from the main road), I found more than a dozen other equipages ready to start with us. But they all took care to keep behind, and let us have the post of honour, since it might be also the post of danger. We were preceded, however, by our kind, disinterested baron, who was leading the way in a light car drawn by a good black horse. There was no road, nor semblance of a road. Our course lay through woods, fields, and ditches; over hills, and down into pathless valleys, for the

most part as uncultivated as the prairies of America, but not so fertile. At length, after four hours of horrible jolting, and many hair-breadth escapes from overturning, our caravan arrived at the point indicated. We drew up on the bank of the river, and surveyed the scene. The river itself might be four hundred feet broad; the opposite shore was steep and precipitous. To within thirty feet of the banks the ice seemed to be strong and firm, but for these thirty feet, it was entirely free of ice, and a black gulf of deep and rapid running water lay between. This must be bridged across. The baron gave a peculiar whistle, and soon about twenty men—his own serfs—from the opposite bank made their way across the ice, and where the open current at our feet prevented them from getting to us, they stopped and began jabbering, ordering, and crying, without any sign of an idea as to what should be done. But my handy friend Harry, taking an axe from the tarantass, made for the nearest wood, and began cutting down trees. Two of them we managed to drag to the river, and throw, with one end across to the solid ice, the other resting on the bank. The baron's men then came to land, and a bridge was soon made by them, under Harry's direction. Then the question was, who would venture cattle and conveyance across the slender and extemporised path? The Russians all positively refused to stir, so the Englishmen made the first passage, and succeeded in getting safely to the ice; thence we crawled very cautiously to the other side, and so

got safely to land with all our traps. Not so some of the Russians.

It may easily be supposed that Harry's bridge was not so strong and durable as London Bridge, and he knew this, for he said to me, after we were fairly over, "Some of yon Russians had better mind their eyes with that bridge. Fifteen tarantasses and forty-five horses 'll try its mettle." And presently, indeed, the bridge did give way in the centre, leaving a few of the main trees at intervals, and with it down went a tarantass into deep water, dragging its three horses after it. The poor brutes struggled hard, but being tied with strong ropes to the vehicle, they fought in vain; down they were drawn farther and farther below the ice. The Russians looked on and crossed themselves. The driver of the struggling horses had sunk with them, and was entangled in the harness, a rope being twisted about one of his legs. He was making desperate efforts to free himself, and had got hold of one of the cross-trees forming part of the bridge, but the struggling of the sinking horses soon pulled him off. At this moment Harry slid along the tree, holding by his powerful arms, and with his body in the river. I saw a knife in his teeth, and in less time than I can tell, he swung himself round, holding on by one arm, and bending forward so that his face touched the water. Then drawing his knife from his teeth, he severed the rope that bound the unlucky driver. The lad's strength was exhausted. He lost his hold on the tree, and sunk; but as he rose a second time, perfectly helpless, Harry seized

his long hair, and having dragged him by main strength out of the water, laid him across the tree, and gradually slid himself and his helpless burden to the bank.

I shouted to him to leave the man's recovery to the care of his countrymen, and come over instantly for brandy and dry clothes. He came across the same tree like a cat, and ran to the other side. Brandy was applied liberally, both inside and out, clothes were dragged from the trunk to replace the wet and frozen ones. The chafing, rubbing, undressing, dressing, and running about to keep up the circulation, consumed some time, during which the broken bridge had been repaired. All the quadrupeds, bipeds, wheeled conveyances, and their freights, had been safely got across, except the one we saw go down with its three horses, and the poor young driver. "Where is he?" I asked a traveller.

"O," said he, with the shrug indifferent, "he lies yonder where your friend left him. I think he's dead."

"Good God!" I cried, "among so many of you has nothing been done to bring back life? Did you suffer him to lie freezing to death?"

"Why, you see, he does not belong to any one here; besides, he might have been dead when he was brought out of the water, and if so we dare not touch him till the 'stanovog' comes."

"And when will the stanovog come?"

"God knows," he said (with the shrug doubtful); "to-morrow or next day, or perhaps longer. The

man is only a serf. God did it. What's to be done? Let him lie."

"What! God did it! Did not God help my friend to place him on the bank that you might save him? And you have let him perish for want of a little aid. Come, Harry, you and I will see what can be done for him, if there be any life left. Bring the brandy, and give me those rugs."

"Listen," said the same traveller in broken English, and speaking low, that none of the rest might hear: "I like the English, and I tell you to let him go dead; you are getting much trouble if you touch him more. The baron will make you pay much money. Get gone directly. That is my advice, take it."

"Your advice be ——" cried Harry. The Russian gave the shrug conclusive, and left us to our fate.

When we got across the river again we found the poor fellow lying just where and as Harry had laid him down. All perceptible life was gone, and he was fast stiffening into a frozen lump. We did all that we could, but rubbing, pouring, chafing with brandy, were without effect; no one assisted us, no one even looked in our direction. Harry had no doubt that he was alive when he left him, and might then have easily been recovered, but all efforts were now in vain. An hour had elapsed, and, forced to conclude that he was past saving, we reluctantly left him, and returned to our anxious and weary women and children.

All was soon ready for a start up the alps. The other travellers had settled accounts with the baron (for three roubles each conveyance; my son, who had seen them paying, told me), and they were struggling up the precipitous banks, assisted by the serfs with ropes and poles. It seemed a desperate undertaking, for the formidable precipices we had to encounter rose shaft after shaft in a zigzag manner, and the slippery pathway was only about ten feet broad, with no ledges or parapets to save a vehicle from tumbling over, should the horses slip or run back; and the cattle were cold and tired, the roads were a mass of slippery ice. However, we determined to go with the rest. The women and children began the ascent on foot, and we were about to make a dash up the first acclivity, when our worthy and disinterested baron stepped forward, all smiles and bows, and said I must pay him the small sum of thirty roubles (more than four pounds ten).

"Thirty roubles!" I said; "and pray what for?"

"For helping you across the river."

"Why, you avaricious rascal, we have helped ourselves across. I shall give your men a little, but to you not a kopeck. You are no Moscovsky dog nor Chinovnick, you know."

"It may be so," he said; "you should not have come. Now you are here, what's to be done? You must pay, before you leave here, thirty roubles."

"Not a kopeck to you; but I shall give half a rouble to every one of your men who helps us to get safely up these hills."

"Not one of these men dares lift a hand to help unless I tell him. I am master here. You are now on my ground and in my power. Pay you must. Besides," and here a peculiar grin illuminated his monkey features, "am I not acting against law to let you go on any terms? Do you not know that you have drowned a moushick, and must answer to the police? I have sent for the stanovog, and if you don't now pay me fifty roubles, I shall detain you till he comes."

I became perfectly speechless at the rascal's cool effrontery; and as he advanced with some of his men to lay hands on me, lost, naturally enough, all thought of consequences, and struck him a straightforward blow, which sent him staggering back a few yards. "Now we are in for it, Harry; strong measures and sharp. Catch him by the neck; punch his head when I tell you."

"All right. That's your style," cried Harry; and, catching him with one hand, with the other he administered one of his gentle taps on one side of the baron's face, which no doubt made the sparks fly in his eyes.

"Turn t'other side, my lord," cried Harry; and, shifting his hold, he repeated the blow on the other cheek. I cannot tell how long this would have continued, had I not begged Harry to desist. The serfs seemed to be perfectly paralysed at our audacity. Their baron, their tyrant, their cruel taskmaster, was catching it in his turn. They did not seem to be in a violent hurry to help him. In fact, I

could see a look of composed satisfaction and enjoyment on their faces. But this mood was not to be depended on, and two men are too few to cope with twenty.

"Pitch him into the tarantass, Harry, and see that he does not get out. That's it! Hand me the pistols. Now look here, you ruffian, who disgrace the name of a gentleman," and I pulled from under my vest a certain medal with the imperial ribbon attached to it. "See this; look well; I am under the imperial protection, and if——" But the moment his eye caught the well-known stripes, his cheeks, which had been crimsoned by the boxing of his ears, were blanched with visions of Siberia. He became on the instant as servile and crouching as he had before been insolent.

"Ah," he said, "I am in fault. Pardon me, my honourable sir. Let me out of this, to repair my blunder. Dogs, pigs, why don't you help the gospodin? Ah, sir! why did you not tell me at first? Pardon! I did not know! God help me! I am lost."

"Remain where you are; and if my property and these conveyances go over any of these precipices, you shall go with them."

Harry danced round the fallen great man in perfect ecstasies, shaking his great fists in his face, and hardly to be restrained from giving him what he eulogised as "a jolly good thrashing."

The serfs now lent their aid with a will, under promise of a reward. So, after a long time and many

narrow escapes, we reached the high ground, and were once more free to pursue the journey. The baron was liberated; the money was paid to the serfs, which might afterwards be taken from them; and off we drove, carrying one of them, as pilot, across the country, thirty-five versts, to gain the Tula road, which we did not reach until about two hours after midnight.

It may here be noticed that since ten the previous morning we had had no regular meals, and I did not now think it safe to remain in the neighbourhood. Obtaining, therefore, fresh cattle, we set off again for Tula, which we ultimately reached at noon, very cold, very tired, and very hungry.

But for the difficulty in crossing the Serpuchov river, we might have been in Tula twenty hours sooner, quite fresh and ready to proceed with the second division of our journey. But now, for the sake of the weaker portion of our freight, we stopped at an inn.

The most serious part of our recent adventure, let me say as we pause, was not the craft and cupidity of the baron in keeping the ice at the side of the river open for days, and calculating on his levy of black mail, but that, after saving a man's life (which Harry most certainly did), and when the others had allowed the man to die for want of attention, even after our later efforts to restore him, we were liable to be arrested, lodged in prison, tried without jury, and condemned for murder. We could have been

fairly condemned by Russian law, and the consequence of the adventure to us, had we not been protected, would have been a Siberia job, or a quashing of the affair by a large compensation to the drowned man's master and the various police officials. The Russian law is terribly foolish and inhuman on this point. A dead body, or a person in jeopardy of life, must not be touched or helped except by the police. If any one interferes and the man dies, that interference brings after it a mass of trouble and expense past calculation, besides danger of punishment. A boat may be upset, its crew struggling in the water, and the banks lined with spectators. Yet if the men in the water cannot save themselves, they must perish. No assistance is attempted. Every thing is left to the police, unless the evidence be very strong that all danger is over. I saw three very respectable young men—two Germans and a Russian—drowned in the Neva, not a hundred yards from the shore. Their small pleasure-boat was capsized in one of those sudden gusts peculiar to this climate; one sank at once, the other two got on the keel of the boat and shouted for help. But, although many looked on, and plenty of boats were at hand, no rescue was attempted. Another gust came, after a time; the boat was light and was again capsized, keel down. Then round it went a third time, keel up; but this time it was empty. The two young men never rose, their lives being lost, when they might most easily have been saved if prompt help had been given. I have seen in a passage to Cron-

stadt from Petersburg (twenty miles) four dead bodies floating in the river. Although hundreds saw them as well as I, they scarcely turned their heads to look, and no remark was made. The bodies were allowed to float on down the river into the gulf, like logs of wood; and at the time of the ice breaking up this is a daily occurrence.

One morning my servant woke me at six o'clock, saying that a man had been murdered, and was lying nearly opposite my house on the road. I got up, and on proceeding to the spot, found a man lying in a pool of his own blood. His head and face seemed to be much smashed, but he was not dead. He implored help and water; but although there were many persons standing round about him, not one would venture to move hand or foot for his assistance. He had been attacked and thus bruised in a public-house, and thrown into the road three hours before I saw him. A woman had seen him thrown out, and immediately informed the "stanovog;" but although the place was not a verst from his house, this worthy did not trouble himself to appear on the scene until four hours had elapsed, and he had been thrice summoned. There, meanwhile, the man had lain in the frost and snow untouched. I saw him carried to the hospital, and heard that he died an hour afterwards. This man also might have been recovered had he been taken in hand as soon as found.

As I was leaving my house one morning, I heard my assistant, Harry, shouting to me from the door of an outhouse for holding firewood. On entering

the place, I found a dead peasant lying on the floor with a piece of rope round his neck, and from a beam the other end of the rope was dangling. To my inquiry, Harry replied that he had gone into the place for a piece of wood to make a handle to an axe, and found the man hanging by the neck. The first natural impulse caused him to open his knife and cut him down, and there he was lying. I found the man quite dead, as he had been for some time.

"Now," I said, "Harry, you have got yourself into a nice mess. The police will make you responsible for his death. What's to be done?"

"Done?" says Harry, "why, tie him up again."

This never would have occurred to me; but Harry was a practical man, and he was right. So we managed to hang the poor fellow over again, and left the spot, happily without being seen. The body was found during the day, and a "stan." sent for, who never suspected the part we had acted in the tragedy. If he had, I have no doubt it would have cost us many roubles to save Harry from being tried for murder.

CHAPTER VI.

AT TULA AMONG THE TRADERS.

TULA is a large government town of the second class, with more than fifty thousand inhabitants. It lies on the direct southern military road to Odessa, rather more than a hundred miles from Moscow, and five hundred and twenty from St. Petersburg. Famous for cutlery and ironmongery, Tula is called the Birmingham of Russia, and in one sense it is so; for it is astonishing how fond the Tula manufacturers are of English names and marks. The name of Rodgers figures on many a bad Russian knife and razor. Goods can be, and are, made at Tula almost equal to the best English; the great bulk, however, of the manufacture is bad in material, and worse in workmanship.

A wise trader will endeavour to improve his quality, establish a good name, and beat his rivals. He will classify his wares, and depends for prosperity on the faith of his customers in his desire to let them have exactly what they want. A Russian (there are exceptions to all general rules, but in this matter unusually few) seems to care nothing for good name in trade, or for the prospect of future transactions with

the person whom he serves. He is no speculator, even for his own benefit; he does not look past the first haul; and he gets the better of his customers, if he can, on all occasions. If he can reduce the quality of his goods while maintaining their appearance and prices, he is triumphant, and will cross himself in thankful devotion before his joss. I should be loth to libel any class of men, but I appeal to every Englishman who has been in Russia, and has had dealings with the natives, for a confirmation of my own fifteen years' experience. I appeal to their own saying, that "a Jew in bargain is outdone by an Armenian, but a Russian can outwit them both." There is no denying that a Russian moushick merchant is in all commercial dealings an incorrigible cheat. It takes more than a wide-awake Yankee to make a "deal" with a Muscovite.

The emperor, always honest and earnest for the improvement of the country, on one of his visits to Moscow called together a number of the principal merchants and manufacturers, and remonstrated with them on this prevailing bad practice. Great complaints had been made to him by his political agents, in those countries which bought from Russia, regarding the wholesale and shameful cheating used by the Moscow merchants in their dealings with the Orientals. They had, it seemed, not only reduced the qualities of their merchandise to the lowest possible degree, but had sometimes even packed the insides of their bales with rubbish, leaving a slight coating of the real article at the top and bottom. This conduct

had given the government agents great trouble in forming treaties and commercial relations, and if not abandoned would bring down upon them (the emperor justly told the merchants) the ruin of their trade. This friendly and sensible remonstrance was accepted by some of them in good and honest faith; they pleaded guilty, and promised reformation. Whether the promise has been kept, it is not yet possible to know.

A fair glimpse of the condition of a people may be got through their commercial character. For this reason, I turn from the merchant arraigned before the Czar to the shopkeeper in the market or bazaar. The system of chaffering, bargaining, beating-down, and wrestling (so to speak) for copecks, is almost universal. I don't think there are half-a-dozen shops in Moscow and Petersburg together that sell on the principle of a fixed price and no abatement. Trade is huckstering, and no common huckstering either; it is hard work—like nothing in England but the sale of an old cow or horse at a country fair, by a veteran cow- or horse-couper. To come off with a few articles bought at their value is a work of time, patience, and skill. A newly-imported foreigner, of whatever nation, is a mark for plunder. If he go alone to buy, he falls an easy prey. If he be accompanied by professional interpreters, it is not much better, as the shopkeeper expects the interpreter to call next day for twenty or thirty per cent commission on any purchase made. Let me illustrate the system by a case (not uncommon), which is my own case.

I often prefer to do my own bargaining; and being in want of a pair of long fur-boots and a portmanteau, before taking a southern survey, I passed all the English magazines, the German, French, and other foreign establishments in Blacksmiths Bridge Street, and descended to the lower regions of Moscow, called the town or "gorod." This part is the old capital of Russia, and walled round, having the Kremlin in the centre. The entrance is under a heavy arch, guarded by images and lamps. One ought to feel the more secure from knavery after passing these representatives of saints; but let the Englishman here mount guard over his own pockets.

My search was along the interminable lines of dark booths which constitute the "Gostino Dvor," or favourite market-place (and here it is *always* twilight: that being the light in which a customer should examine what an able trader has to sell). At length, after an hour's search, I found the line sacred to Crispin and leather goods, and was hauled into one of its booths by the touter at the door. At first I could not discern objects distinctly; but when my eyes had adapted themselves to the obscure light of the place, I saw the presiding genius bending before me, in the shape of a venerable mild-visaged man with flowing beard, who held in one hand a tumbler of smoking tea, and in the other a lump of black bread, on which was a quantity of salt and half a raw herring. He took the last gulp of his tea, laid down his delicious sandwich, ran his dirty hands through his great beard, stroked it affectionately, rubbed off

the remaining grease of his hands on his caftan, turned reverentially to the joss in the corner, crossed himself, and then signified his desire to know what I might want. How could such a man be an extortioner? See his frugality—black bread and herring. Look at his shop: a mere booth, containing no expensive shopmen. Besides, has he not in my presence just appealed to Heaven? Surely that is a guarantee for fair and honest dealing. Let us see.

"I want," I said, "a pair of the best fur-boots and a good portmanteau."

Although the walls and ceiling were crowded with all kinds of articles of his calling, he began to pull out a large drawer. The handle came off while he pulled, and he fell back on a great pyramid of boxes, boots, portmanteaus, and trunks, built up in the centre of the floor, overturning the whole in a confused mass.

"Ough!" he said, "God help me! This is an unlucky omen." And again he crossed himself, with a view, as I supposed, to a fresh start. The wreck having been put to rights, and the drawer opened at length, the dealer produced a pair of long boots lined with fur.

"There, your honour, is the very thing you want. Most excellent boots; of the best quality to be found in Moscow. Yea Boch!" (God's truth.)

Nevertheless, as my experience assured me that a Russian shopkeeper invariably begins by producing the worst article he has, I tossed the boots from me, saying, "Won't do; better." Another drawer was

opened, a third and fourth were gone over, with the same result. On the fifth attempt I condescended to examine the articles produced; the good man having declared, with the usual oath, that each in its turn was the best he had. The soles of the boots in my hand were of pasteboard, with a thin coating of leather neatly glued over it, and nicely polished up. The fur was cat's hair (without any skin), also glued to the legs, and the legs themselves were of the thinnest possible horse-hide.

"Listen; these will not do; you must not detain me. If you have not any better, I must go."

"No, your honour, better than these cannot be made. They will wear all your life, Yea Boch!"

"Then I must go to another shop."

"Stop! I will look again. Ah! Heaven help me, here they are!"

Better, but not up to my mark. None of the boots would do; and in despair I made for the door, but was intercepted, and implored to remain a moment. A pair of excellent-looking boots was now fished out from a corner. The legs came considerably above the knees, the fur was a real skin, and the soles were evidently sewed, not pasted on. These I thought would do, and I laid them aside until I should have selected the portmanteau.

I was shown articles made of pasteboard to represent leather, of paper and wood, of paper and leather, and of leather as thin and as useless as paper. As they were produced, I was informed, with the usual solemn asseveration, that each in its turn was the

best that could be made, and all solid leather. Another attempted escape to the door brought out the real thing: at least, what had to me all the appearance of a real solid leather portmanteau. Now came the tug of war—the price. The last half-hour had been mere skirmishing. My friend began a long eulogium on the goods; the words pouring in a torrent through his beard. They were every thing conceivable that is good; would last an age; were made specially for a prince; I might travel in the boots to Siberia and back, if so inclined, and never cool my feet; the portmanteau would go with me to China, or one hundred times over the Urals; the emperor had no better portmanteau. And between each clause of his eulogy he cried "Yea Boch!" He concluded by asking seventeen roubles for the boots, and thirty-one for the portmanteau: in all forty-eight roubles, or seven pounds ten, and at that price he was making me a present of them, "Yea Boch!"

I offered sixteen roubles, or two pounds ten.

"Sixteen would not pay the making; but hear me! Take them for forty. I shall lose the rest. What's to be done?"

"No; take sixteen, or I go instantly."

"Yea Boch! it is too little by half; but hear for the last time." Here he seized me by one hand, put an arm round my neck, and hissed in my ear, "Thirty roubles. There! I am giving them."

"Sixteen is my last word." I said good-day, and made for the door, but had scarcely got outside when he fastened on me by both shoulders, dragged me

back into the shop, and bringing his great beard and greasy face close before mine, as if to impart a great secret, recapitulated all his encomiums, with greater force and with more earnest appeals to "Boch" to attest his truth—all which he concluded by asking twenty-five roubles. This time I made so determined a bolt that I succeeded in getting two doors off, on the way to a rival establishment, and was already in the hands of five or six touters pulling me in different directions, when again my old friend came running after me.

"Come back, baron, come! What a hurry you are in"—I had given him a precious hour—"I will take less."

Not wishing to go through the preliminaries in another shop to which I had already submitted, and knowing the shops to be all much alike, I returned to the fray, and after haggling and chaffering for another twenty minutes, during which my friend passed through stages of twenty, nineteen, eighteen and a half, eighteen, &c., we finally concluded the very stiff bargain at my original offer—sixteen roubles; which the dealer took with most placid satisfaction. I felt victorious, and said, "How shameful of you to ask three times more than you take, and tell so many lies!" "O!" he replied, "words do not rob your pocket. I am no thief. It is all fair bargaining."

As I left the place I saw him signing the cross before the joss, whether in thankfulness for a good bargain, or prayer for a pardon, I cannot tell; but

after I got home I scrutinised the purchases in a good light, and found that I had no cause to be vainglorious. I was no exception to the common rule, but had been so completely cheated that I would gladly have disposed of my bargain at a loss of fifty per cent. I learnt afterwards that this same shopkeeper is a serf, worth four hundred thousand roubles; that he owns ten shops in Moscow, and some in Petersburg; and that while he ate black bread and herring, he had two extravagant sons at the university, and daughters accomplished in all the graces of a Russian education, enjoying horses, equipages, and a grand house. Such instances of wealth accumulated by frugality and extortion, are not rare amongst the Russians.

In Tula I saw the usual abundance of churches and popes (priests), barracks and soldiers, merchants and hucksters, peasants in dirty sheep-skin coats, officers and gospodins in uniform driving in stylish equipages drawn by fast trotters from the steppes, or cobs from Siberia. There were all forms of Russian private vehicle and public conveyances, with two, three, or four broken-winded, bent-knee'd, sore-backed, uncleaned hacks to each, and driven by ragged men in long gray coats of felt, and little hats four inches high, stuck full of the ends of peacocks' feathers. Burnt-down houses by the dozen lay in ruins — the remains of fires. There were streets paved with boulders, picked into confusion, and left in a chaos of hills and chasms. The inns were, as

usual, full of tobacco-smoke, and paved with dirt, alive with tarakans—the Russian representatives of the black beetle—and busy with silent whispering groups of tea-drinkers. But these are only the common outside features of a town in the heart of Russia. Of Tula proper I saw nothing; my time being occupied in the care of our goods and repacking of our conveyances. We found it necessary to remove all our property to our own rooms, and to keep good watch over it.

We only missed one pillow, a rug, two boxes of sardines, and a bottle of wine, until Harry, who had been storming about the place in search of the lost articles, caught one of the red-shirted waiters coming out of our room with a bottle under his shirt, which proved to be castor-oil stolen out of the medicine-chest. Harry considered it fit punishment to make him swallow a large dose. But when the effects of the dose began to display themselves, the man declared himself poisoned, and was carried to a hospital hard-by, while we and our packages were placed under the surveillance of the police.

Policemen brought to the inn stood sentry at the doors of our rooms, and we were prisoners for nearly two hours, when a doctor from the hospital, fortunately for us, a jolly Russ, came with a captain of police. While the captain of police tackled Harry, who, ignorant of the language, answered "Da, da" (yes, yes), to every thing, I explained to the doctor what had really happened. The worthy doctor having got hold of the oil-bottle, cried,

"Bravo! Poison!" The most excellent medicine in pharmacy. Look here, captain. The pig" (meaning the waiter) "was taken ill with cholera, cramps, spasms, vomiting here—mind you, here in this room—before madame and mademoiselle. They run to the next room, so does my friend here, a great English my lord. What could they do? But, sir, the case was desperate. This gentleman" (pointing to Harry) "is a great doctor, accompanying my lord and his family; there was no time to send for me. What does he do? He opens his great medicine-box—look, there it is—and gives the dying moushick a great dose of apernicocus celantacus heprecaincos masta, the best remedy in the world for cholera. I tell you, 'Yea Boch!' there now, that's the truth."

"But," said the captain, "the moushick, doctor, how is he?"

"Ah! the pig!" (and here he spat on the ground in contempt), "I left the beast quite well and sleeping. I will answer for him. Come, captain, let us go. Poison! That is a good joke! Come, captain. Safe journey. Good-bye!"

The police captain was satisfied, however, reluctantly. With two bottles of something better than castor-oil, and a fee, which the doctor might or might not divide with the captain, I paid the cost of Harry's thoughtlessness. As we were about to start, Galen approached the carriage, and took me aside.

"Terrible fellow, that fierce-looking friend of yours. He looks as if he could fight the town and

eat up the governor-general; but tell him to 'box 'em,' and don't let him prescribe medicine again for any moushick. No one dares give medicine here but the faculty, and you cannot buy any but through a certificate from one of our noble profession. When you return this way, remember my name; send for me. Grog, beef-steak, box'em, Palmerston! Ha, ha! Adieu."

Thus throwing his whole stock of English into his final speech, he waved his farewell, and off we started for Orel, the next main point of our journey.

CHAPTER VII.

ACROSS COUNTRY FROM TULA SOUTHWARD.

We had spent eight hours in Tula, so that it was eight at night before we left, and dark. One of our tarantasses had been exchanged for a fresh one, the other not being considered safe: and in the new vehicle I had put my children, taking my own post for the night beside the driver on the box. All had been comfortably arranged for a long four-days' journey without stopping, except to change horses. We had proceeded swiftly and comfortably for six hours, when, in leaving a small village where we had changed for the fourth time, and in turning a rather sharp corner, my tarantass upset with a smash. Thanks to the inside packing of pillows and beds, nobody was hurt. Our calls for help brought the "starosta" and his man from the station-house, and by their aid we were enabled to resume our journey. I should not have mentioned this small incident had it not been to show another phase of Russian manners.

The starosta here referred to was the chief or overseer of the stables, but the word has a more extended sense. It is applied to all overseers, bailiffs,

and chief men over the peasant class in stables, hospitals, farms, villages, and estates. The starosta has great influence over the peasants, and should be appointed by the peasants themselves, as was the case in days of yore, before the peasantry were serfs. The name implies age and experience, and in those more primitive times discreet elders were elected by the peasants, in public meetings assembled, to represent them, and take care of their interests. To these starostas they rendered a willing submission; indeed they and the sotnicks (overseers of a hundred) formed the only defences of the peasant against the baron. Péter the Great found it almost impossible fully to raise his taxes from the migratory peasantry, who in his day possessed the land. The tax-gatherer could never find the same men twice; they were gone, and new tenants, or no tenants, occupied the land. Peter made, therefore, a law, that at a certain date every peasant or cultivator of the ground was to be a fixture on the land he was then farming, and that land only was his. All that became surplus under this arrangement the emperor appropriated to himself. Peter divided the country into governments or districts; appointed a governor in the principal town of each, giving him soldiers, police, and all the machinery of command. He then established a poll-tax, and, giving to the progenitors of the present barons grants of land in these districts, made *them* responsible for the yearly payment of this tax. The government looked to the barons for it; and they, backed by the military power of the governor, levied

it from the peasants. In the disputes arising out of this arrangement, the starosta represented the people, and he was chosen by them for this purpose amongst others. They were not then serfs, but the levying of these taxes in course of time furnished the barons with an excuse for enslaving them. Peasants who could not, or who would not, pay, had their land taken from them, and were forced to work the land belonging to the baron. The barons, having to pay for all, introduced compulsory labour, more or less to meet their difficulty; and the peasants, being ignorant and priest-ridden, were easily robbed of their lands and rights by their self-constituted tax-collecting masters. Thus it was that, in course of time, they came to be regarded as the property of these men, and were bought and sold with the land, as beasts of burden. The government connived at all this.

So long as the tax was paid on each soul, all was right, and the passport gave means of determining the numbers upon each estate and village. In this way have the barons gradually, and surely, appropriated to themselves the land, labour, property, and persons, of the peasantry. And, this being the case, instead of calling the new edict an emancipation of serfs, it ought strictly to be called a restoration of the peasants' rights.

But the starosta, while this change was taking place, was not what he was first designed to be—the peasants' delegate. He has become a tool in the hands of the baron and the stewards: chosen not for

his age and experience, but more frequently because of a certain kind of superior intelligence, and sometimes for a scrupulous devotion to his masters. Now, if the steward be a bad one, the starosta must be bad, because he is the exponent of the steward's will. Woe to the poor peasant when this is the case! The starosta knows intimately the domestic history, feelings, and conduct, of every serf on an estate; he pairs the young for marriage (not often compelling them against their inclination), and takes them before the baron or steward for his sanction. He selects the conscripts for the army; those who are to be sent out on "obrok;" and those who are to stay at home. He has the appointment of the different gangs of labourers on the estate, and it is he who, either with his own hand or by deputy, punishes the serfs for real or imaginary faults. In plain terms, he is the slave-driver of the American plantations, with this very material difference, that he is invariably a serf himself—one of the class over which he is placed; often, therefore, it will happen that he hates the steward, who is generally a German, and quietly contrives with the other serfs to thwart the steward's plans. Many tales are told of dreadful acts committed by serfs, at the instigation of the starosta, when goaded to madness by the tyranny and cruelty of stewards. I could tell some of these tales of horror; but why rake up the memory of past atrocities, when the whole system is doomed to destruction by the late emancipation edict?—one of those courageous acts for the advance of civilisation by which Alexander the Second

will be honoured centuries hence, whatever may be said in his own time by carping politicians. When this edict has achieved its purpose the starosta's occupation is gone.

The starosta who had come to our assistance imagined that my yeamshick was drunk; so, without more ado, he began to kick and beat the poor man in a most brutal manner. Not content with his own blows, he caused two of his satellites to aid in the kicking and beating. The poor man, notwithstanding our continual remonstrances, was kicked, beaten with a stick, slapped in the face, and bore it all without saying a word. Abuse and blows rained on him, until my friend Harry could stand it no longer. His English love of fair play was scandalised at seeing one man thus beaten by three, and, had I not restrained him, he would soon have made short work of the starosta and his gang. But the hindrance of a police difficulty could not be risked. We waited, therefore, impatiently until the men were tired of knocking the poor driver about. He was then sent back to the stables, and a boy of twelve years, or rather less, was put in his place on the box. Against this proceeding I strongly protested, for I thought the exchange much for the worse. Remonstrance, however, had no effect. The starosta assured me that he had not in all his gang a better driver than the boy; besides, he was brother to the pig who had overturned us; and as the horses belonged to them—or rather to their master—they must be driven back by one of them to the station whence they came.

So, to the very tender mercies of the boy we were committed until daybreak.

The yeamshick is a great Russian institution. He is not to be confounded, as is sometimes done by strangers, with the extortionate ruffian drosky, lanska, and britska drivers, in the streets of towns and cities, nor with the coachmen of the gentry and aristocracy. He is a distinct animal; the interior swarms with him; he "works" every macadamised and unmacadamised road in Russia, from the shores of the White to the shores of the Black Sea; and all roads are alike to him. Whether I make a bargain with one to take me to Siberia, or to the next town, it is all the same to him. He goes off to his gang, puts me into a hat, and I am drawn for. The fortunate drawer gets me for his job, and is responsible to the rest for his performance of the duty. I am quite safe with him; he will carry out his part of the bargain, if he can. The traveller, entirely at his mercy, over endless tracks and plains, through dismal forests, frost and snow, among wolves and bears, never distrusts the poor yeamshick. He is neither a ruffian nor a robber, but simply a peasant, who commenced driving troikas at six years of age, and who will drive them till he dies. He has one failing, the need of vodki: give it him the traveller must, but let the traveller give it sparingly; and if you hit the right mean between parsimony and indiscretion as to this point, he will do any thing for his charge short of keeping awake when he is sleepy, merely because he drives. Considering the immensity of the country,

the number, length, and character of the roads, and that the yeamshick is the only reliable land-carrier for passengers and goods (excepting the few railways), the number of these men must be immense. They played no unimportant part in the Napoleon invasion, and in the transport of troops and material of war to the Crimea; and to write any thing about interior travelling in Russia without giving a few lines to the yeamshicks would be leaving Hamlet out of his own play.

Let no man imagine that he has tried Russian travel if he have merely visited Moscow and Petersburg, and run a few hundred versts on any of the few main, well-kept roads. Wide of these, lies on both sides the interior life of this immense country; and to see it we must penetrate through forests seventy miles long, jolt over wave-like undulations of endless barren or poorly-cultivated land, and bid farewell to every vestige of macadam. In my case the deviation from the main road took place at no indicated point. No finger-post pointed the way, no road led to it.

"I want to go to Evanofsky."

"Well," said the yeamshick, "that is the road."

"Where? I see no road."

"Ah, yes! but I'll find one." And with that he turned the horses' heads at right angles to the straight broad road we were on, lashed, screamed, and succeeded in plunging us across a deep, wide ditch, into what appeared to me to be an endless, pathless expanse of stubbled and unstubbled ground; tree,

shrub, fence, post-house, or hut, there was none, to mark the route, as far as the eye could reach. The frost tinged the expanse with white, and the wintry sun, as it shone with a cool light over the long sweeping undulations of the ground, made the surface of the land glisten like water. Some of us, indeed, could scarcely be persuaded that we were not about to plunge into some trackless pool, without compass, pilot, or chart. The inexperienced will always bid a regretful farewell to the beaten road, as to an old friend, and will face the trackless ground with uncomfortable notions about grizzly bears, wolves, ditches, precipices, and snow-storms. I confess that I lost sight of the black-and-white striped mile-post with some regret. Hitherto we had travelled with these posts and the telegraphic wires constantly on our right and left, as mute friends and companions. We could read the number of versts on each post when we had nothing else to do, and we could think of human messages going and coming on the wires; but now they are gone on far to the south, keeping company with travellers on the one good broad road that leads to Odessa. As for us, we were over the ditch, and off through the fields.

The change was sudden and complete; but all changes are sudden and complete in Russia. Summer goes in a day, and winter comes. One may cross a river in a boat at night, and walk back on the ice in the morning. Doors and windows stand wide open in summer for a breath of cool air; but in winter the cool air is barred out with double windows, triple

doors, and heated stoves. So in regard to clothing; thin linen summer habiliments are thrown aside in a day, and the reign of furs begins. Wheels are upon all carriages of every sort one day; snow comes during the night, and the wheels all vanish; in the morning nothing is seen but sledges. The transitions from class to class are of the same character: One class is of gentlemen and barons; the next step is to moushicks, peasant-serfs who live on black bread and salt, seasoned with sour cabbage and garlic, and who are covered with a dirty sheepskin instead of being clothed in ermine, sables, and fine linen. Cronstadt is reached from Petersburg by steamers in one week; in the next, the traveller runs over the same water with three horses before him. The people will leave a hot bath, and plunge into a hole made in the ice; they will leave a room heated to seventy or eighty degrees, and follow a funeral for six miles with no covering on their heads, in a frost twenty-five degrees below zero; they will fast seven weeks on cabbage and garlic, and then guzzle themselves in a few hours into the hospital, take cholera, and die. Diseases are generally swift and fatal—to-day well, to-morrow dead. More than two-thirds of the cholera cases die. Women are interesting, plump, and marriageable, at fourteen; they are shrivelled at thirty. Despotic power works in extreme without control, religion without morality, commerce without honesty. There is land illimitable, without cultivation. There are splendid laws, and poverty of justice. Some of these

contrasts are now being softened down by the wise progressive policy of Alexander the Second.

Off the beaten track it was that I first learned what yeamshicks and horseflesh could accomplish. If our courage and confidence sank a degree, and we held on with bated breath as the tarantasses jolted over the deep ruts, ran on one wheel along the edge of a steep slope at an angle of forty-five, or plunged into a chasm with a crash, to be pulled out by the most desperate application of the whip, no such charge can be brought against the drivers; they seemed to rejoice in having quitted the monotonous road, and their spirits appeared to spring into new life with every obstacle. They had now got something to drive over—something worth being a yeamshick for: "Go, my angels!" "Step out, my dear pigeons!" "Climb up, my sweetheart!" And at every ejaculation down came the knout with terrible force and effect.

At one o'clock in the afternoon of the second day after leaving the main road, we came in sight of the end of our wanderings, on the slope of a long hill. We were obliged to pack up. The descent was steep, and looked extremely dangerous; the yeamshicks, for the first time, paused before taking it. I got out to reconnoitre. On each side of us lay a dense and gloomy forest of oaks, birch, and pines; the track down which we had come a certain length had been evidently cut through the hill for nearly a mile and a half. Far below in the valley lay a considerable number of what my servant Harry took to be peat-

hills. Those were huts. I could see also the cupola of a church, the chimney of a mill or works, and, on an adjoining eminence, a residence of some pretension. How to get down was a puzzle; the ground was slippery from ice, the descent long and precipitous, and the cattle were nearly exhausted; the last team having come twenty miles. If our men chose to go down with the usual clatter and dash (we had no drags), the result might be disastrous. The yeamshicks, however, soon made up their minds to try the old way, and I could see no better way. They crossed themselves (their infallible resource), and were gathering up the ropes for a start, when a voice called out from the wood on the left, "Hold, hold! Do you want your necks broken, you fools?" I knew in a moment, from the manner in which the Russian was spoken, that this was the voice of an Englishman; and as he came struggling through the brushes and low underwood that lined the edge of the wood, his appearance did not belie his speech. He was short, fat, and florid; dressed in a fur-coat, long boots, and fur-cap; he carried a double-barrelled gun, and was followed by a man much in the same garb, but younger, taller, and stronger than himself. Two great shaggy cream-coloured wolf-dogs followed the second man, who carried a double-barrelled rifle, and had a large sheathed-knife in his belt. While the one was collecting breath, after abusing the yeamshicks for intending to gallop down the hill, the other came up to me, and after surveying us very deliberately, said, in the pure Doric of canny Scotland:

"I'm just thinkin', but maybe I'm wrang, that ye're no unlike kintramen o' ours—that is, Englishmen, I mean?"

I acknowledged the proud relationship, and said,

"I seek a village called Evanofsky, and a man called Count Pomerin; can you help a countryman to find them?"

"Surely; the village is yonder in the glen, and the man is not far off. May I ask if ye are the party he wull be expecting from St. Petersburg? If sae, wull be right glad to see you, but at the present moment it is impossible to get speech of him. We've a bit hunting on hand, you see, and Pomerin is at his post, as we were when you cam' betwixt us and our line of fire."

"God bless me!" I said, rather quickly; "are we betwixt the game and the rifles?"

"That's just precesely the position we have all the honour o' occupying at this present moment, and in half an hour after this it might not be uncc pleasant; but for that time, I think, we're safe, unless for a stray beastie or sae. Now, if you like to join the hunt, you and the other gent-le-man, I would advise you to send on the conveyances and contents to wait you at Pomerin's; they will get a rayal welcome, and I shall send an escort with them." This being agreed on, he said to his friend, "Pins, whistle on that Dugal crature o' yours."

Mr. Pins put a whistle to his mouth and gave a shrill call, when presently a figure emerged from the wood, no inapt representative of the famous Dugal

creature in Rob Roy. He had bandy legs, a great mass of tangled red hair on his head and face, red ferret eyes, and he dressed in a felt coat which reached only to the knees, a wolf-skin cape, and large boots, a world too wide for him; and a short-handed axe stuck in his belt. Mr. Saunderson had made some sign which I did not observe, that brought his henchman, a man of like sort, also to the spot. These having received their orders, proceeded to drag the wheels. In a few minutes two young trees were cut down, and, having been chopped into the right length, were thrust between the spokes and across the hind-wheels of the carriages. Having thus effectually put on a safety-drag, the two 'Dugal creatures,' large and small, mounted beside the drivers; but Harry and I remained behind with the ammunition, guns, and pistols; and then the vehicles began sliding down the hill without us, in a very comfortable manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH THE HUNTSMEN.

I HAD often heard of a hunt in the interior, and was glad, although fatigued, to join one. The plan is something akin to the ancient practice of deer-hunting in the Scottish Highlands. In the present case, however, the game was different: not deer, but wolves, bears, foxes, and other vermin, which had been found very destructive and troublesome for some time past. The greater number of the men of several villages, including every man who could handle a gun, had turned out. I attached myself to Mr. Saunderson, Harry joined Mr. Pins, and we followed our new acquaintances into the wood from which they had come upon us. On entering, I could see that preparations had been made on a large scale. Just inside the wood, and extending a long way—perhaps to near the bottom of the hill to the left, and for a less distance to the right—men armed with guns, rifles, pistols, knives, old scythes, and other such weapons, were stationed thirty yards or less apart from one another, while, behind each, a horse was picketed to a tree. Many of the principal rifle and armed men, like my friends Pins and Saunderson,

had 'Dugal creatures,' or peasant-serfs, attached to them, having in charge dogs, horses, and other accessories. The whole party formed two lines, probably a mile and a half long; the first line armed; behind it the unarmed and the horses. On the opposite side of the road, and on the trees in front, was a strong net, ten or twelve feet high, extending up and down hill, as far as I could see, parallel with the road, leaving the road itself convenient for the work of slaughter, while the men might fire into the net at pleasure from the cover, advance into the open, or mount and run in case of danger. How the net was secured, or what resistance it might make against a large infuriated animal, I had no means of knowing; but I imagined that though it might hinder or entangle, it could not stop, or offer any effectual bar to a bear, or even a strong maddened wolf.

My companion enlightened me on sundry points: How, I asked, did they get the game into the net?

That was easily managed. Six hundred men had been sent early that morning into the opposite wood, at a point four or five miles from our present position: these men had spread themselves in a line across the wood, the two flanks gradually advancing faster than the centre, so as to form a curve by the time they reached the road where the net was placed, the flanks touching the ends of the net; then the centre advancing, drove all the game which was in front of them, right into the toils to be shot down. These men carried poles and other instruments for making all kinds of hideous noises, and the number of them

being large, the whole wood became a wild Babel of dreadful sounds, which frightened and daunted the doomed animals.

"This is an inglorious system of hunting, only worthy of barbarians."

"Oo ay; but ye ken the Russians can only operate in the mass way—that is, when they have plenty to keep them company. Besides, there is sometimes a bit hand-to-hand struggle, to vary the thing."

"Where is Count Pomerin?"

The count was down the hill, on the left flank, and commanded that side, while he (Saunderson) held the like position on the right up the hill. Pomerin's post was reckoned the more dangerous, as the chief haunts of the vermin were well known to be down the hill. Pomerin, he continued, was a dead shot, and always on those occasions took the post of danger. He was a gentleman every inch of him; "a wee thing ower fast, ye ken; but he's young; and then his grandfather died last year, and left the laddie three millions of roubles, besides this immense estate, with the ten thousand bodies on it, two sugar manufactories, our vodki works, and the cotton-mill. When Mr. Saunderson cam' here, some years ago, the auld man was hale and weel, and this young man—whose faither got a trip to Siberia and never cam' back—was the grandfather's pet. The young lad's mother was a serf, a bonny winsome thing, it is said; she's no ugly yet; she and her family were freed, and she was highly educated at Moscow, before and after her marriage; still this marriage was a cause of trouble.

The proud aristocrats shut their doors on the pair of them. He fell into a revengeful spirit, and began writing papers on political economy, meaning to publish them abroad. Spies were in his house. Every line he wrote, and every word he said, they reported to the police, and so the end was that he vanished one night, and noo' they just say he is dead. No expense has been spared on the son's education; he can gabble in French, German, Italian, and all other modern languages; he has travelled in France, England, and Italy. He has a stud of horses, and keeps a table like a prince: but O, man, I've been told that he was spinnin' the auld man's bawbees last winter in Petersburg in fine style! If ye're a friend of his, gie him a canny advice to haud a better grup o' the siller. At this present time he is negotiatin' wi' a widow-woman, a 'generalshee,' to buy her bit estate. Her steward is a big rascal, an' Pomerin will pay grandly if he does not mind his hand. I ken what I ken aboot that place, and he might do waur than tak' my coonsel aboot it."

"Who is your friend Pins?" I asked.

"Pins!" he said; "a poor cotton-spinning, ignorant, upsetting cuif, but as sly and sleekit as a fox. He has managed to get Pomerin to quit four years of arrears of rent and his workers' obrak; and he is tryin' to persuade his landlord to build a great cotton-mill, and send him to England to buy the machinery. The commission he'll get on that is worth ten years of his present wee place."

"But," I said, "that might be a good investment

for the count." "Na, na, it's ower far to bring the cotton and to send the yarn to market; there's no railways here like England; and there's no outlet for it in other countries, the demand is limited, and pretty well supplied now. If the count is wisely advised, or would tak' a practical man's advice like mysel', he will invest his money in a safer channel. Let him cultivate his ground; our auld mother Earth is a generous and fruitful lass, if she is well nourished. If he *will* manufacture, let him use the material his land produces. There's flax and hemp at the door; there's beetroot for sugar, and rye for bread, and vodki. He'll want machinery, nae doot, for these—corn-mills, saw-mills, and agricultural implements; but he can sell the ropes and yarn, the vodki and the sugar, without trouble or expense. These large cotton-mills about Moscow and Petersburg are doing well at present—not so long after the war. But just suppose cotton was to grow scarce, or there was war with America, or amongst the Yankees themselves—not unlikely—or suppose the government was to take the duty off the imported manufactured goods, there is not one of these manufactories would be worth auld iron. It's not a good doctrine of political economy, and it will bring its recompense some day, to rob the poor moushick bodies, who are the chief consumers of the cotton cloth, to enrich a few foreign machine-makers, capitalists, and agents. The extra wages given to the workpeople is no equivalent for the enormous prices taken from them; besides, they don't get the benefit of the extra wages. It only goes into

the pockets of the greedy barons whose slaves they are, while the estates are lying uncultivated, and the serfs are as poor and miserable as ever."

"But still," I said, "these manufactories are good civilisers. They require intelligence and skill in the workpeople, and this is much wanted in Russia."

"Civilisation in Russian cotton-mills! Hot-beds of vice and corruption! Whaur hae ye been, to speak that gate? I could tell ye something aboot that. But,—hear to that!"

Sounds from the six hundred men in the wood had long since been heard, increasing in volume; but now they had become deafening, and indicated the very near approach of the sport. Halloaing, shouting, yelling, whistling, blowing of horns, and a din as of heavy blows on iron kettles, formed a discordant chorus, and so loud that I could hardly hear the latter part of Mr. Saunderson's lecture on political economy. But his "hear to that," referred to a rifle-shot, immediately followed by a clattering of shots all down the line. I looked across the road, and could see the net vibrating, bulging, and in some places coming down, entangling heavy bodies in its meshes. Two large wolves, strong, and apparently fat, followed by a third, made their way cautiously at first from below the net, and then jumped into the road. Three or four shots went off at the same moment, but only one wolf dropped, the other two made as if for the wood on our side, but seemed to scent danger in that direction, for they turned round

and tore up the hill at rattling speed. "Don't fire," shouted Saunderson; "let off the dogs!" And immediately four noble dogs sprang into the road, right in front of our position. One wolf was caught in a moment by the first two dogs, but the other ran into the wood, hotly followed by the other couple. Pins was reloading, when the three animals dashed amongst his legs, and upset him as they passed. I can only relate what I myself saw. A deer, or elk, with magnificent broad horns, cleared the net at a bound, right in front of us. "Now," said the Scotchman, "that's my quarry." The animal had scarcely touched the ground when a bullet struck him in the brain, and down he went. This was the first shot he had fired, and he hastily reloaded, for he said he fully expected bears. At this time a horseman on a splendid English hunter dashed up the open steep, and the firing abated. "That's Pomerin,—what's he after? He'll get shot," said Saunderson. As he approached our position, he shouted in English, "Two large bears are heading up the wood inside the net, and the men are falling back; they will escape if we don't mind. Mount and follow who will." Saunderson was on his horse in a moment, and after the young man up the hill. Turning to look for Pins and Harry, I saw Pins, the picture of fear, behind a tree. As I came up he was imploring Harry to help him on his horse, that he might quit the field; his own man had not returned. "Blow me if I do," said Harry. "But I'll take the loan of it. And here, old cock, take my blunderbuss,

and I'll just try your rifle on a Rooshian bear." Whereupon he coolly took Pins's rifle out of his awkward hands, untied the horse, jumped on his back, and was after Saunderson before I could have stopped him, which I certainly did not intend to do. Had I been as well mounted and armed, I should have followed: as it was, I was condemned to inactivity, and the society of Mr. Pins.

The shots were still rattling off down the hill; several horsemen had passed in pursuit of the bears immediately after Harry left; and in a short time the rest of the huntsmen advanced into the open road to get to closer quarters with the game in and behind the net. I also left the cover, saw them fire several volleys ingloriously at the prostrate and entangled animals, and was about to examine the effects of their firing by going close up to the net, when a low growl, then a loud savage howl, issued from behind, and immediately a bear burst through an opening into the road among the men; as if disdaining to touch them, he turned again and faced the wood whence he had come, and where he knew his pursuers to be. The rifles on our side were all unloaded, so that he deliberately sat for a short time in the middle of the road untouched. I was just on the point of trying the effect of revolver shot, and had made a few steps to get a proper and sure aim, when Saunderson rode from the wood, and drew up not twenty feet from the poor surrounded beast. He raised his rifle and fired, and the bear fell. The men, who had been all scampering off, returned to

finish him with their knives, but Saunderson cried out, "Keep back, he's not dead; he will comb some of your hair if you don't mind!" He spoke too late. One man, more daring than the others, had stooped down to run his knife into the bear's throat, when, with astonishing swiftness, bruin raised himself to a sitting position, and darting his great paw, armed with those formidable talons, at the man's head, tore down cap, hair, skin, and flesh to the elbow. The man fell forward on the bear—in fact, into his arms —and was about to experience one of those deadly hugs, or embraces, which would have put him out of all pain, but a bullet from the same hand that first struck him put an end to the bear's power of mischief. The wounded man sprang up, and with a piercing shriek ran down the hill. He was ultimately carried home, and survived, but was for life frightfully disfigured.

The six hundred men, who had been making the noises and driving the game into the net, began to assemble in the road and gather together the spoil. The dogs came wagging their tails, some with their fangs dripping and bloody, and their sides and heads showing rather severe wounds.

"Ah, Barbose, Burlak, my lads, you've done your part nae doot. But, God help us! where's Pomerin, and that body Pins, and that great big Englishman of yours?"

"As for Pins," I said, "I left him in the wood, but I must inquire of you where the other two are."

"Me! I ken whaur I left them, but it's no easy

saying whaur they may be now. Come on and search; ye see, the bears divided as we headed them. I and two other men kept close on this one as he skirted the edge of the wood; twice he turned to offer battle, but took the rue. The other two men fired at him, and missed; at the last fire he bolted into the road, then I got a clear shot; and had my nag not moved, that shot would have finished him. Pomerin and your man Harry have followed the other bear. I hope they are all safe."

He had left his horse, and we penetrated a good way into the forest, accompanied by a few men, Saunderson leading. So we came to a glade almost bare of trees. In the centre of this, he said, there was a large deep dell half a mile across, the sides sloping into the centre, and dense with trees all over. "Here it is; and as I live here's the horses tied to a tree. Living or dead, they are here."

Although the foliage had fallen, the place looked dark and dismal; and just as we reached it two shots were heard in the hollow, the one a moment or two after the other. Down we rushed, sliding among the damp old leaves, and holding on by tree-trunks and branches. At length, in answer to our shouts, we heard a halloa repeated. This led us to the very bottom of the immense pit; and there stood Harry, fast in the embrace of the young Russian. Their guns were on the ground, and the bear lying dead beside them. As soon as Pomerin saw me, he sprang forward, embraced, and kissed me with emotion. He was much excited; and in answer to our questions,

told us that, not thinking what he was about, he followed the bear down into this awful hole.'

"I had fired twice at him, and hit him once, but not fatally. The villain seemed to know that both barrels were empty, for he turned at bay on this spot, a fine place for a game at hide-and-seek with a bear. I dodged him round and round the trees a good while, and having no time to load, threw my gun down. At last he got me in a corner, from which I could not move but in one direction, and that was into his arms. You see this tree; behind it is, you perceive, sheer cliff, on both sides a gully. Well, I got behind the tree; the bear advanced, sure of his prey, no doubt. I stared him steadily in the face as he came on, but on he came; he was within five yards of me. I drew my knife; I had no hope of success; for, see, he is an enormous grizzly. Ah, the horror of that moment! I was just waiting his next step, and my eyes were dancing with fire-sparks, when I heard a voice from the cliff behind me, 'Lie down on yer belly, flat—quick; and I'll give the buffer somethink to eat harder nor gentlemen's flesh.' Ah! God bless my grandfather for teaching me the English language! These words were the sweetest I ever heard in my life. Down I went, flat on the ground; the bear had taken a step or two forward, and was looking up to the cliff, for I kept my eyes on him. I could now almost feel his breath on my face, when, in a moment, ping, whirr, then in another moment, ping, whirr, went the bullets, ripping over me, right into the bear's head. Over he went,

rolling down the steep. Down jumped my preserver to my side, and I've been hugging him like a bear ever since."

He turned to repeat the dose, but Harry set off with a "No more o' that ere."

When we returned to the scene of the main slaughter, we found the road filled with peasants—those who had been beating up the game, those who had been shooting it, the dog and horse attendants, and a crowd of idlers from the village. The game—consisting of the two bears, four cubs, two deer or elks, five large and two small wolves, hares, rabbits, and other small animals in abundance—was given over to the peasants, except only the two bears, which were ordered to be taken to the count's residence. I should have expected that the peasants would have made some demonstration of joy at the deliverance of their young master, which was known to them all by this time, but nothing of the kind took place. A few of them, indeed, came forward and kissed his hand, and said, "Thank God, he was safe," but these, I could perceive, were his domestic retainers and attendants. They were better dressed and cleaner than the generality of the peasants, and looked like the pampered and favoured menials that they were. Amongst the others I in vain looked for any expressions of interest. Here was the raw material, and in the right spot for studying it. The excitement of the sport, in which every one might be expected to share to some degree, did not seem to have ignited in these people one spark of emotion. There was nothing to remind me of the peasantry of my own happy land,

even in their worst times. I saw no smiling happy faces, no sparkling glad eyes, no manly blunt fellow officiously pressing forward to be taken notice of, no division of class into farmers and farmers' men, traders, and ploughmen, no evidence at all of degrees in the social scale, no appearance whatever of a thriving, happy, or contented ignorance, even among the serfs, no pride of clanship in the daring courage and appearance of their chief. Yet he appeared to me to have—in fact, I know he possessed—all that was requisite to call it forth, had it been there. No. They showed themselves, as we moved forward and amongst them, stolid, apathetic, and listless. Caps came off certainly, and way was made for us with alacrity. But if they had any feelings at all, they managed very cunningly to hide them. Their faces were in general good in contour, and their individual features regular, some of them handsome. The out-door workers were brown or swarthy, and those who attended the in-door manufactories pale and sallow. As to height, bone, and muscle, they seemed very fairly developed. The Russian peasant men are, indeed, the finest in the country; many of them models of manly shape and beauty. One thing struck me as very remarkable, the brilliant whiteness and regularity of their teeth. They were, as a rule, white as the purest ivory and perfect in form. This is ascribed, I find, to the eating of black bread. Yet, notwithstanding all these favourable points, the expression on their faces was stupid, dull, and unmeaning; what expression there was, I could connect only with cunning and distrust.

CHAPTER IX.

SERFS OF A VILLAGE IN THE INTERIOR. A LOOK ROUND THE CHURCH.

In outward expression the Russian serf is a mere clod of the valley. His dress is seldom varied. A little round low-crowned black felt hat, with narrow turned-up rims, covers the usual profusion of brown or carroty tangled locks, which are sometimes parted in front, and cut straight at the neck. Every serf I have seen, who had reached manhood, had a beard, whiskers, and moustache, untouched by razor or scissors; so that most of these natural beards were magnificently long, rolling in soft curls, or spreading and bushy.

Beards are in Russia the peculiar prerogative of two classes only, but those the most numerous, if not the most potent—serfs and priests; all other Russians crop and shave. Government officials of all kinds—and they are a host—gentlemen, barons, and soldiers, will not allow a hair to be seen, unless it be an imperial, a royal, or a Napoleonic moustache on the upper lip. Beard is the mark of servitude and priestcraft, and is therefore abhorred by the "respectability" of Russia. Count Pomerin's serfs were pro-

fusely hairy under their hats, were dressed in loose, often ragged, coats of gray, brown, or black felt, or in cloth, coarse as "Hieland heather," reaching a little below the knees, and held together at the waist by a belt, like a narrow horse-girth. Under the coat would be found either a striped cotton or plain linen shirt, of the coarsest material, called "crash," sometimes used for kitchen towels. Trousers of the same material were stuck into brown or grey felt boots, and the toes within the boots would be wrapped round with a coarse linen rag in lieu of stockings. On their hands the serfs wear fingerless leather mittens; and in the girth-belt, on the right hip, carry a short-handled axe.

After passing through the crowd of serfs, we proceeded down the hill, crossed a morass which caused the horses some trouble, and then over a low wooden bridge, spanning a frozen stream, passed to the outskirts of the village of Evanofsky. The peasants, who followed listlessly, sauntering, and silent, gradually vanished into their wooden huts. These thatched village huts are so low, that one wonders how such well-grown men stand up in them, especially as their walls are sunk at all manner of angles off the square. The gables face the street or road; no door is visible, but there is a large wooden gateway next the house, and a small door leading to the dwelling, somewhere in the rear. The gateway is for horses and cattle, carts, &c.; and the allotment of each peasant is fenced in from the road by a close high paling, which extends to the next hut. These allotments being of consider-

able breadth, a village spreads over a great space of ground.

In some parts of Russia the huts have a low under story, for sheltering cattle during winter. It admits horses, cows, sheep, pigs, goats, and poultry. The flooring is open, and the animal heat from so many bodies, ascending to the inmates above, helps to keep them warm. In the summer, the quadrupeds go to the field, and the bipeds above take possession of the vacant cellar as the coolest place for the hot weather. A trap-door admits from above to this ground-floor, and a long sloping board outside, with cross pieces of wood nailed on it, like the temporary ladders used for building purposes in England, is the way out into the open air. In the villages belonging to Count Pomerin the cattle of the peasants are housed in outbuildings immediately adjoining the low huts, the communication between them being always open. It follows that the men and women and the cattle live very much on the social principle, and have all things in common. I saw cow- and horse-dung built up three or four feet high from the ground, and one and a half feet thick, all round the huts, to keep out the coming winter frost. What windows I noticed were mere pigeon-holes.

The street or road between these habitations was fully six times as broad as Cheapside in London; and a double row of tall trees ran down the centre, forming, no doubt, a cool and pleasant promenade in summer. Be it remembered that this was no road-side village, neither was it an outskirt to a town, but

a genuine Russian feudal village, or, as the Scotch would say, "clachan," a long way from any public road or corporate town, embosomed in the heart of a large valley, between immense regions of forest and the rolling plains.

After a long ride we reached the church. It seemed to stand in the centre of the village; and the other long lines of mud streets, like the one we had passed, radiated from it as a centre. It was a very large and handsome new building of stucco brick, with a Corinthian front, and constructed—as all Russian churches are—in the form of a cross, with gilded domes, cupolas, minarets, and two immense belfries, each containing one large and six small bells, fourteen in all, which were now keeping up a most atrocious jangle. Over the front entrance was at one end a very fairly-executed painting of the Last Supper, and at the other a picture of some saint's story which I did not understand. All the architectural designing and outside decoration was the work, I was told, of a serf belonging to the place. The church was open. It happened to be a saint's day (St. Vladimir, I think), and the count, with his party, including myself, entered the sacred edifice. We were not very long in it, the count and the other Russians of our party getting very swiftly through their religious observances; but the religious faith and observances of any people have a powerful effect in the formation of their character, and what one sees of the Greek Church in its practical bearing on the Russians is worth note.

This Greek Church is a schism from the Roman Catholic, or the Roman Catholic is a schism from the Greek; at all events the one split into two, on the elevation of Gregory the Sixth to the patriarchal chair of Rome. Before that time the four patriarchal chairs of Rome, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Constantinople, had been independent the one of the other, and each patriarch ruled in his own division; but squabbles had been going on between the patriarch of Rome and his brother patriarch of Constantinople, for the supreme headship of the whole Christian world. The two grand divisions which to this day are maintained—the Eastern or Greek, and the Western or Roman Church—now present so many points of similarity that a common origin is evident, and so many points of dissimilarity that the impossibility of any united action is equally evident. The Greeks have no purgatory, their priests must all be married, the Emperor is head of the Church in the same sense as the Queen of England is head of the Church of England and defender of the faith, and each diocese has a supreme patriarch, who is only supreme in his own district. It is to the especial honour of the Greek Church that it has not been intolerant of other creeds, has not persecuted with fire and faggot, and at the present time allows in Russia every form of religious belief to be publicly followed by strangers and foreigners. But no proselytising is permitted. The great defect of the Greek system is the almost total exclusion of moral teaching. All is display of ceremony.

When we entered the church service was being performed by four long-haired priests, attended by their clerks, and robed splendidly in sacred vestments of cloth-of-gold, with chains of gold and crosses hanging from them. The services consisted of chantings, genuflexions, crossings, and readings from a book of prayer; the voices of priests and assistants rising and falling the whole pitch of the gamut at a word, running in a low monotonous tone for a few seconds, then bursting afresh into a high key for a word or two, and then sinking into a mumble of inarticulate sounds. Immediately behind the popes (all priests are called popes in Russia), and facing the entrance, was a raised platform or dais, extending across that part of the church: with wings and side doors, not unlike the stage of a theatre. In the centre of this stage stood the altar, around which were blazing a large number of wax candles. At the side-wings were images and pictures by the dozen. A small rail, with an opening in the centre, separated this altar, and its attendant holy images, from the main body of the building.

The audience was pretty numerous, chiefly composed of women, many of whom carried babies, and were getting themselves crossed and sprinkled with holy water by one or other of the priests as they passed. There was not a single seat in the church; all worshippers were standing, bending, bowing, prostrating, and diligently crossing themselves. The prostrations were complete, to the touching of the cold flags with the forehead, and the kissing of the

ground. A few reading-desks were placed here and there about the church among the people, and on each lay for study a small picture of some particular saint. The one I examined was a miserably mean representation of Joseph and Mary, with a child between them. On these desks, beside each of the pictures, lay a plate for the reception of money, and there was a stand for tapers and candles. The poor devotees crowded to kiss the pictures, made their children do so too, and when the children were babies held the pictures to their lips. After a time the performing priests retired behind the side-scenes, and reappeared on the stage beside the altar. Then was heard a choir of very good voices commencing another part of the performance, and now, bending, crossing, and prostrating were renewed with added energy. During all this time the people were going and coming, passing and repassing, through the church, as they sought out the particular saints' pictures before which they desired to perform their devotions. No one seemed willing to rest for a single moment. Wax tapers and candles were being sold near the door, varying in price from three kopecks to many rubles. I am told that the priests derive a considerable revenue from the chandlery trade—first selling their candles for sacred purposes, and after they have burnt for a short time, putting them out to be resold for common use.

On this and on many other occasions I did not hear one syllable of preaching or homily-reading, nor one hint of the moral precepts of Christianity.

At Easter there is absolution given to the Greek Church people. Six weeks of common fasting have been previously observed, and a week of uncommon, almost absolute starvation, precedes Easter Sunday. During that week confession is made, and absolution in some sense given in a very wholesale manner by the priests who attend for the purpose.

"Evan, where are you going?" said a friend of mine to his servant-man, on one of these days of "gavating," that is, confessing.

"I am going to confession; I'll be back in a quarter of an hour,—the church is just at hand."

"But I cannot let you go to-day; I want you."

"God help me, John the son of Thomas, but I must go; this is the last day of gavating, and if I don't go, I shall have no certificate to get a clean passport; I will be back in a few minutes."

"How can you manage to confess all your year's sins in a few minutes?"

"Your honour, if I had only five kopecks, the pope would keep me a long time; but I have a rouble, and that will get me through in five minutes; I know how to do." Off the fellow went, and returned in less than half an hour with all his spiritual accounts squared. On the Sunday after this week of confession, all Russia is cleaned and purged of twelve months' sins.

A dramatic exhibition of the resurrection is given in every church in the empire on the Saturday evening at twelve o'clock precisely. On Easter Sunday here are kisses and congratulations, eggs are

handed about from hand to hand, feasting is at its height, and the hospitals are full by Tuesday or Wednesday.

There is a manufactory near St. Petersburg, at which about two thousand hands used to be employed. On a week previous to a certain Easter Sunday, while confession was going on, in order to take as little time from Mammon as possible, the machinery was stopped in sections, and the people were permitted to go in batches, according to the nature of the work at which they were employed. Weavers confessed together at one time, spinners at another, and so on. Connected with, and adjoining, these works was the church where confession took place, and a private passage led from the works to the church by which the penitents passed into the church: having confessed, they went into the street by the main church entrance to go home. Now, in Russia, all workpeople are strictly searched by male and female searchers as they pass out from their place of employment; but in confessing season when these particular workpeople went direct to the church, by the private way, to confess a year's sins in the lump, the right of search had never been enforced. But on a certain day the director of this factory received a hint concerning this omission, and took his measures accordingly. At eleven o'clock a large batch (four hundred in all) of women, young and married, girls and old wives, left their various posts, and took their way across the yard, with demure and penitent looks, to the private

entrance, where they were admitted as usual, filling the stairs and passages. When all were inside, the bottom door was bolted and guarded. Means of escape being thus cut off, the front rank on approaching the door of communication with the church, found half-a-dozen searchers, backed by as many policemen. The first two women searched were stripped of a large quantity of valuable material secreted under their clothes, in their boots—in fact, wherever they could stow it. Each had as great a weight of plunder as she could possibly carry. The work of searching went on, but the mass of women on the stairs and in the passages got scent of the presence of the searchers. The word was passed, a peculiar sound was heard as of many persons dressing and undressing, and in a few minutes the women were all standing as innocent as lambs and as harmless as doves, up to their knees in material, valued, according to an after-computation, at five hundred pounds sterling.

This had been going on for years. But let it be remembered that the people are not taught morality and honesty as part of their religion.

I will attempt to give an idea of what Holy Russia can achieve in this line. Saint Nicholas, or Nikoli as he is termed in Russia, was "a saint so clever," who, many years ago, lived on the banks of Lake Ladago the Great. He was a man reputed for his wonderful sanctity, austerity, and wisdom. Many extraordinary cures had he effected, which were ascribed by the simple peasants to supernatural power.

He belonged to the real old uncorrupted Greek religion, such as it was in the days of its purity; he flagellated himself unmercifully for his deficiencies, bemoaned the falling off of the primitive faith, and prophesied dire calamities in consequence. One of his favourite prophetic visions was the downfall of the Ottoman empire, the total destruction of all the Turks, the substitution of Russia for those "dogs" in the East, in the reign of a namesake of his own, a Nikoli, and the simultaneous restoration of the pure old faith. One day he was on a sloping bank of the great lake, seated on a large boulder-stone, talking and speaking words of wisdom to friends who had come a long way to hear him, and at the same time inwardly praying to be removed to the capital, that he might have there a wider field of duty, and give his counsel to the emperor, who was at that time consolidating Petersburg. At once the stone on which he sat began to move, and, sliding gently down towards the lake, carried him with it, in spite of the exertions of his friends. On the lake the stone swam like a duck, and set off, dead against the wind, across the sea (the Ladago is some sixty miles broad, and eighty long). Nikoli waved a farewell to his astonished friends, and calmly held his course. For six weeks he sailed on, buffeting winds and waves, not knowing whither he went. At length he passed from the great lake into the Neva. But he did not reach the capital. A ukase had gone out against the arrival of any more big stones, or monoliths after that which Peter rides on, in the Admiralty

Plains. Nikoli's stone must have known this, for when it came to a place called Ishora, it turned into a small tributary, and held on up the narrow river, dead against the stream, for four good miles. Then it stopped stone-still at the village of Colpino, where the saint was obliged to get off and land. It so happened that just as Nikoli came sailing up this small river, the peasants had collected and were dancing one of their holiday dances. They saw the strange sight of an old man sailing on a stone, and thought they saw the Evil One. "Churt! churt!" they cried, and ran off. One man, however, who had more sense, cried out, "God be with us! that is old Nikoli Nikoliovitch from the Ladago, the wise man." This discriminating man took the poor exhausted mariner in, and dried his feet, set bread before him, got the samovar ready, and laid him on the peach bed, doing all he could to revive his poor weather-beaten frame. But the saint's time was come; he died in the arms of his kind entertainer, prophesying many events, "which have all come to pass," and having by this expedition on the stone entitled himself to be canonised and placed in the highest rank among Greek saints. So, canonised he was; a picture of him was made and encased under silver, with rays of glory springing from his head; the picture was hung up in a frame, and a small church built on the spot where he died. To this church resorted many thousands every year on the anniversary of his death, the ninth of May. They who had diseases were healed, the lame walked and the blind saw,

after a visit to Colpino on the saint's day. By and by the Empress Catherine established at this place a cannon-foundry, and brought Gasgoine, from Carron in Scotland, to teach her to make guns. He brought more people, and she also sent a host of Russians; so the little church became too small, besides being found at an inconvenient distance from the great new village. Then there was built a grand new church, as large and handsome as any ordinary saint could desire, for Nikoli; and as he had been a source of great profit in the old church, it was deemed that he would be more profitable than ever in the new one. They thought, therefore, to remove him; and one day they did, with great pomp and ceremony, remove him from among his old friends and old faces. The ceremony over and the door locked, the popes retired to play at cards at a party in Vassilia Petrovitch's grand government house. But if Nikoli came to Colpino on a stone without any free will of his own, he was not going to be removed from his old comfortable quarters by the will of the priests without his own sanction; so he got up in the night, kicked open the door, walked three miles back to his dear old church, and hung himself up again on his old nail, close to the altar. There he was found in the morning. The priests were not to be put out by an old picture, so they took Nikoli back, double nailed him, rolled stones to the door of the church, and set a watch. It wouldn't do. Nikoli came out at a window, and was found in his old berth on the morning of the second day. The priests now

appealed to the empress, who sent Potemkin to negotiate with the saint, and after considerable trouble he managed to bring the old fellow to terms. Nikoli consented to be removed, on the condition that on the ninth of May in every year, for all time to come, a procession of great priests should carry him on a visit to the old church, and carry him back. For he was determined that the people should have this opportunity of receiving his blessing and enjoying his miraculous healing powers. This is the legend; now for its effects.

For a week previous to the ninth of May I have seen the principal road to Colpino gradually assuming the appearance of the road leading to some great fair. Pilgrims of all ages and both sexes begin to pass me first singly and at intervals, then by groups in closer file, until the road is covered with weary, travel-stained, footsore, and hungry-looking travellers. Many of them come from far distances, two or three hundred miles away. The great proportion are not moushicks, or mere peasants, but very respectably-dressed persons above the rank of serfs, and evidently possessing means. They are nearly all barefoot, and carry the pilgrim's staff and wallet. They must not enter a house on their journey, unless they would spoil the blessing they expect. The sun may be blazing on their devoted heads, the rain may be coming down in torrents: this does not signify; on flows the stream of devotees. I have seen them ill and sick and fainting,

and I have seen cordials given to them by kind English women. The lame pass, and the blind, and the rheumatic, and people afflicted with various diseases; sick children in the arms of their fond mothers, and old tottering age supported by stalwart sons and daughters. On the eighth the road is densely crowded; the Petersburg pilgrims who do not take the liberty "to boil their peas" start in the evening to walk all night, and arrive in good time in the morning. For those who do "boil their peas," trains run to Colpino, beginning early on the ninth, and pour out their teeming freight at the stations every half hour until twelve o'clock. Those who can command a team, drive down, instead of mixing with the poorer sinners in the train. The pedestrians and more sincere dupes have by this time reached the spot, so that on the final day, carriages only are seen on the road.

I have been present at Colpino Place on the evening of the eighth, and have seen from fifteen thousand to twenty thousand wayfarers such as I have described, lying in the wind and rain all night around the church. I have been there on the ninth, and have seen this number doubled by fresh arrivals from Petersburg by train and road. Taking my stand at ten o'clock to see the procession which begins at noon, I have had to wait until one, because Nikoli would not consent to move until the large iron box for offerings was filled with money. I have gone into the church and taken my hat off to as ugly an old saint as it is possible to see; I have

waited—not, I am afraid, in a very patient frame of mind—until my eyes have been gladdened by the sight of the holy banners, old tawdry and moth-eaten images and pictures, to the number of thirty, carried each by two priests clothed in sacred vestments. Then I have seen this great multitude rushing, crushing, squeezing, and pushing, to get into the line of march, and prostrating themselves in the mud in a long line huddled together, a mile long and more, enjoying the extreme felicity of having these banners and pictures — but especially old Nikoli, in a worm-eaten frame—carried over them by the priests, who trod without mercy on the poor superstitious slaves. Then, as I have thought of the Indian Juggernaut, I have had my hat knocked over my ears, because I forgot to take it off as the humiliating spectacle passed by. I have followed this immense crowd with my eyes, as the people rushed again and again to be trampled over by the priests, and throw themselves again and again in the mud and dirt before and under the images. I have heard of miraculous cures effected on that great day; of those who came blind, going away seeing; of those who came on crutches, going away without them; of those who brought rheumatisms, leaving them behind; and even of women who never had children, bearing children thereafter. Beyond what I have described, however, nothing was to be seen, unless it were the shows, the dancing bears, the sweetmeat stands, and the segans or gipsies, brown as copper, who are miracle-workers, and who for half a rouble read my hand, and be-

stowed upon me three wives, fifteen children, and four estates.

On leaving the church I happened to fall in beside Saunderson; and as we proceeded to the count's residence I asked him what he knew of the morals of these Russian priests. "Is card-playing a very common thing with them?"

"Common! Why, all Russia is ready to play cards morning, noon, and night. Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle, and deal. The emperor's whole court plays; the aristocracy play to a man; the ladies, of all grades, fill up their time at cards—Fool, Your-own-Trump, Three-Leaves, Kings, Windmill, and a hundred other games. The shopkeepers sit playing cards for hours at their shopdoors. The bargeman in his boat, the peasant in his hut, children, young men, girls, all play at cards. Many an estate changes hands in an evening. I have known three hundred men, women, and children, and a large property staked on a single game. But these long-haired, long-bearded, broad-brims of lazy priests are of all such gamblers the most incessant. I will tell you an instance of my own knowledge."

And this is what Saunderson told:

You saw that fat, tall priest, with the large brown beard, who sprinkled the holy water on the bairns. Weel, he is the head pope of this church, and lives beside it; in fact, there is a covered passage leading from the church to his house direct. One evening, before a saint's day, I was on a visit to Mr. Pins, who lives in that wooden house beside yon cotton-mill in

the hollow, and we were enjoying ourselves as we best could, when a message came from the priest to ask us all to supper. He had a few friends with him, and would be glad to see us. As nothing of this kind is to be refused, we went—I, and Pins, and his wife and daughter. The priest's friends were two beardies like himself, who were to assist next day in church; his wife also, of course, was there. Supper over, cards were introduced, and down sat Pins and the three holy men to the game, while I was left to entertain the leddies as weel as I could. The four gamblers gradually forgot every thing else in the room, the head priest being the most intent of the four. The game went on. Now Pins swept the table of roubles, and anon one or other of the priests —the head man evidently losing fast, and Pins winning.

Tempers got lost, and scarcely civil words were exchanged amongst the party. I could see Pins's red face, glowing like a nor'-west moon, under the flush of excitement and brandy. As we had supped late, Sunday morning was on us before I was aware. Two o'clock struck, and Mrs. Pins and I jumped to our feet. Two o'clock on a Sunday morning in a minister's house playing cards, the gamblers priests of the Holy Greek Church! It was against the conscience of a Scot to assist at such on-goings,—not that I am straitlaced to an hour or two, considering the difference of clocks. I therefore energetically backed Mrs. Pins, who was requesting her husband to go home. Pins rose—but reluctantly, as it seemed to

me—and was about to accompany us. The priest had no mind to let him go off so easily. He and his partner had won two hundred roubles, and it was clearly against all rules to run away so soon. The others must have their revenge—it was only two o'clock. So he sat down again, saying, "Go, my dear, with Mr. Saunderson. I'll play the old fellows till daylight, if they like. It shall never be said that an Englishman shirked off because his pocket was full of other people's money."

As our host politely showed us to the door he said to me, "Do you attend the church at eight?"

"Yes, it is my intention; but I don't think you will be there in a fit state, if you play much longer. It is a shame."

"No fear," he said; "but your friend has won much money, and I must have my turn. It is nothing."

At seven o'clock I was awoke by a servant with information that his master had not returned, and that madame desired me to walk to the priest's house and see how matters stood. I dressed hastily, and went to the parsonage, rectory, or what shall I call it? As I passed the church I saw that it was in course of preparation for the morning performances; but my business was not with the church, it was with the priests. Just as I reached the door a clerk (decchock) was entering. He was a dirty, yellow, sickly fellow, with a flavouring of stale tobacco.

"Where is the pope, Vassilia?" I said.

"Yonder," pointing to the room I had so lately left.

"Playing still? It is too bad."

"To be sure; it is nothing. I have known master play two days and nights at a stretch. But it is now time for service, and I must tell him."

I pushed past him into the room. It was Sabbath morn, half-an-hour before service, and the men who were to officiate sat round a table with flushed faces, eager looks, dishevelled hair, and ruffled attire. Candles were burnt down in their sockets, daylight streamed in through the shutterless windows. The brandy and wine bottles were empty. A great jug of "ghuass" was on a side-table, old cards littered the painted floor, and the atmosphere was reeking with the fumes of the "papeross;" for smoking was still going on. I saw at a glance that the tide of luck had left the Englishman. The priest was buoyant; he was flat.

"They are winning it back," he said to me as I entered; "I have had three hundred, now have but fifty."

"Ay," said the tall priest, "and this game will get that back also; it is for fifty—is it not?"

Then the clerk entered, and advanced with as little show of concern as if the exhibition was a fit and usual preparation for the church rites, and after reverentially crossing himself, intimated to the priest in chief that in half-an-hour it would be his time to go in to commence the services.

"Very good, Vassilia, my son. Don't disturb me now, but listen;—come back exactly three minutes before eight."

"I hear, and obey," said Vassilia, and vanished.

I cannot say these men were drunk; on the contrary, they seemed more sober than they had been when I left them at two o'clock; but the demon of play held them in his grip; they were as fresh for it, and as absorbed as if they had only played two or three hours. My remonstrances and expostulations were thrown away, and in indignant curiosity I sat down to watch the end.

The priest and his partner lost. Pins and his partner won another fifty. The next game was to be double or quits, the deal made with a fresh pack; and, as I sat in full view of the tall priest, I could see his face brighten up, and a look of intelligence pass between him and his partner. At this moment the decchock again entered. "Three minutes to eight o'clock."

All but the tall priest threw their cards on the table and rose, saying, "A fresh deal after service."

"No, no," he said, "keep your hand, partner; I shall keep mine, it is a good one; and we shall play the game after our return: here, Vassilia, give me a towel, wet: that will do. Now my robes,—there—that comb; and now go every one to your posts. I shall be there presently." Thus saying, he proceeded with a firm step to the church by the private entrance already mentioned. As he left the room I saw him place his good hand of cards within his

sacred robes, under the inside fastening. He was evidently determined not to lose sight of his trumps, and carried them off on his person into the church. I ran round to the front entrance, and was just in time to witness the commencement of the service. It is a wonder judgment did not fall on the chief priest. And it did in a way. At one part of the service, just as he was stepping on the platform, he put his hand inside his robe to pull out his handkerchief, and, as he drew it out, the cards came also unbidden, and fell scattered over the altar floor. This would have paralysed any ordinary man; but that priest never winced for a moment. He looked coolly at the cards, then steadily at the people, as much as to say, "You all see that; take notice of it. I shall tell you about that by and by." He then continued the services. At the close he pointed to the cards—then beckoned a little peasant boy, with a shock head of white flaxen hair, dressed in a shirt of coarse linen and trousers to match, not very clean, who had been crossing and bending beside a poor peasant woman, his mother:

"Come here, boy!" The boy went. Turning to the congregation, he said: "I shall give you a lesson you will not forget for some time. You see these cards lying on the floor. Do you think I put them there for nothing? We shall see. What is your name, my boy?"

"Peter Petrovitch."

"Well, Peter Petrovitch, go and pick up one of those cards you see on the floor, and bring it to me.

There, that will do. Now tell me, Peter Petrovitch, what card is this?"

"The ace of spades," said the boy, with ready knowledge.

"Very good, Peter Petrovitch; bring me another, that's a good boy. What card is that?"

"The queen of spades," said Peter.

"How well you know them, Peter Petrovitch! bring another. And what may that one be?"

"The ten of hearts."

"That will do, Peter, the son of Peter. Now turn round and look at this picture. Can you tell me what saint it represents?"

The boy scratched his head, then shrugged his little shoulders, lifting them up to his ears, then scratched his head again, and said: "Ya naes nigh." (I don't know.)

"Now look at this one. Who is this?"

The same answer.

"And this?"

"I cannot tell."

"That will do, Peter, the son of Peter. You may go to your mother."

Turning to the people, he continued:

"Do you know now for what purpose I put these cards on the floor? Do you not think shame of yourselves, tell me—say, is it not disgraceful and scandalous that that nice white-haired boy can tell me in a moment the name of every card in the pack, and yet he does not know the name of one of the blessed saints? O, shame, shame on ye, so to bring up the

young, after all the good teaching I have given ye! Go away and learn the lesson I have given you this blessed day. Don't forget it, and don't force me to bring cards into this holy place again. Vassilia, pick the other cards up, and keep them for me."

So with solemn step he left the church to play out his interrupted game for a hundred roubles.

I have given this sketch of a Russian card-playing priest simply as I got it, and nearly in the narrator's own words, omitting Scotticisms, but retaining the train of thought. Of its literal truth my own experience of the priests, and my later knowledge of the friend whom I call Saunderson, as well as Mr. Pins, entirely assures me.

CHAPTER X.

RITES OF HOSPITALITY.

COUNT POMERIN'S residence was on a slight rise, sloping down among gardens and trees to the valley. We entered his grounds by a large wooden gateway, and passing through a short avenue of trees over a broad well-kept gravelled path, bordered with flowers and shrubs, a turn to the left with a short curve brought us in sight of the count's birthplace and principal country seat. It was a very long and large wooden building, but I afterwards found it to be only of wood. It seemed to be of brick, and plastered. Three parts of it were of one story, but very high, and the other part, which formed the servants' establishment, of two stories. The principal end had large broad windows looking out on a flat lawn, intersected here and there with gravelled walks, and I could see gymnastic poles, swinging trees, &c., at the farther corner. In the middle of the lawn (which might cover three acres), and all about it, in confused disorder, were a great many temporary structures, for what purpose I was soon to learn.

The large windows were all brilliantly lighted up, as if for an illumination. About twenty serfs with

blazing pine torches met us as we turned the corner, and preceded us to the main entrance. This was surrounded by men and women of various degrees, all in the holiday costume of the country, who raised a sort of uncouth cheer as we advanced. Across the threshold of the door there lay stretched out the grisly carcases of the two old bears. Around these very material mementoes of the Englishman's skill in rifle-practice the twenty pine-torch bearers assembled, flaring and waving their torches.

The vestibule, or hall, or lobby, was one blaze of light. In the centre was a table, on which was erected a very handsome oberis, image, or joss; in front, on the table, lay a large silver salver containing pieces of black bread, and stands of the same material for salt. A lady stood on each side of the table, one old, the other much younger; these were the mother and grandmother of the count, countesses both. As he leapt from his horse and jumped into the hall over the bears, the younger lady ran into his arms and embraced him. All this—with the twenty or thirty horsemen dismounting, grooms in red shirts and wide black velvet trousers stuck into their boots and falling in folds over the sides, and a crowd of stolid staring peasants in the background—gave the scene a lively and uncommon character.

"What does it mean?" I said to the talkative Scotchman.

"That's mair than I know," said he, "but I suspect it is some kindly nonsense of my lady countess—some old custom."

As he spoke, the count, who had been talking to his mother, came out and said to us:

"It seems we are to have a little mummery. My lady mother kindly insists on receiving my guests, and more particularly the Englishman who saved her wild boy's life, in a true old Russian style. The ceremony is simple, over in a moment; but let me tell you for your comfort that after it has been gone through, feudal fashion, my guests are peculiarly sacred in my house and on my property, and are to be defended from injury with all the means I possess. Now therefore, my friend, advance, and as you cross this bear trample him under your feet."

Harry stepped forward, swinging his great arms about as if he did not know where to put them, crossed the barrier, was received at the table by the two ladies, and warmly greeted by the countess in good English as the preserver of her son; the black bread and salt (previously blessed by the priest) were offered to him, and then he was hurried off to the bath by two attendants in red shirts. Saunderson followed as the second bear-killer, and went through the same process, with the exception of the bath. It was my turn next, and as I accepted the bread and salt the countess said, with a sweet smile, "You are very welcome—I cannot tell you how much. Your family is all gone to rest till morning. There, Constantine, show the baron the bath."

I was conducted to the rear of the building, and introduced into a very comfortable room, where two strong fellows were waiting to commence operations

on my poor wearied body. This outer room was very well furnished. It might measure about five yards by eight. The floor was covered with some kind of soft matting, on which a clean canvas cloth was spread. There were two excellent large luxurious sofas, a wardrobe, tables, chairs, looking-glass, towels, and all the necessaries for the toilet. I perceived also a suit of my own clothes spread out on one of the tables. I threw myself on a sofa, exhausted, and from that moment became a passive lump of human material in the hands of my two attendants. My fur boots were dragged off and tossed into the wardrobe; fur coat and under-clothes shared the same fate. As each article was removed I felt relief inexpressible. These garments had not left my body for nine days and nights, and as the last was taken from me my sense of enjoyment reached its climax. But the relief was too much. I felt a total prostration of body. The energies so long kept on the stretch, the nerves so long braced to the perils of the journey, gave way, and I swooned for the first and only time in my life.

I think I may be forgiven this weakness when it is remembered through what roads we had come, the fatigue being enhanced in my case a hundredfold by the care and responsibility attaching to the party of women and children accompanying me, and more especially by the fact that being chancellor of the exchequer, and having to pay the yeamshick money at every station, besides other small matters, I had not enjoyed two hours' consecutive sleep for nine

days and nights. This is the paymaster's grief on a long Russian journey.

But I am lying naked and insensible in the outer room of a Russian bath. The two moushicks had emptied a bottle of eau-de-cologne from my lady's repository over my head and face, and were applying a brandy stimulant when I recovered.

"You are tired, baron; but we will soon mend you. Don't stir." Without more ado they lifted me up like an infant, and carried me into the inner room, where the atmosphere was considerably warmer. Into a bath lined with lead, and nearly filled with water, I was then plunged without ceremony. At first the water felt so hot that I thought I must be scalded, but after a time it became so delicious that I felt willing to remain, so bathed, for ever. But my present possessors were of another mind. I was lifted out and placed on a bench like a flat trough beside the bath. There I was rolled and turned, and firmly rubbed all over with handfuls of mat fibres and soap dipped every second or two into the hot water. I was scrubbed remorselessly by my determined nurses; I might kick and struggle, but it was all one. They grinned, held me down, and scrubbed on for a mortal quarter of an hour. I thought the skin would be peeled off my body, and felt sharp prickly shooting needle-point pains at every pore. Then I was plunged into the bath again in hotter water, and forcibly held there for five minutes. I was in hope this might end the process, and signified a determination to get back to the outer room—but no.

"We have received orders to make you clean and well. Heaven help us, how angry you are! Our orders must be obeyed. You must now go into the 'stove-room.'" It was of no use to resist. I resigned myself to my fate, was lifted out of the bath and carried into the vapour den, the essential part of a Russian bath.

What I had gone through had been only preparatory. This place might be twelve feet high, lined with closely-fitting boards on the roof and all round, so that no steam might escape. In the centre of the floor there rose broad steps of wood, commencing from two sides, and terminating in a large flat board on the top. This board, crowning the edifice, was about two feet below the roof. The steam or vapour was raised in this manner:—A large stove of brick, like a baker's oven, stood in a corner and nearly filled one-fourth of the apartment. It had been heated almost red-hot, the red charred embers of the burnt wood remaining in it. One of the men seized an iron ladle, and with it cast water into the fiery gulf. The steam or vapour thus generated rushed out, rising to the roof for vent, and finding none it filled the place. I was laid at first on the bottom step of the centre erection, as being the coolest, the vapour increasing in density and power the higher it rose. Even here I felt nearly suffocated with the steam. The rubbing recommenced with fresh vigour, and now buckets of cold water were poured over me, each bucketful having the effect of a shock from a powerful galvanic battery.

Step by step was I lifted up, while the rubbing and dashing of cold water went on alternately, and additional water was thrown into the oven, increasing the density of the steam at every application. At last they got me on the flat step at the very top, with my nose nearly touching the roof. There I lay in a dense body of hot vapour, hot enough to scald me had my body not been previously tempered for it. I did not know when it was all to end.

I had observed, on my admission to this den of steam, several instruments of torture, of the use of which I had a vague presentiment. There were bundles of birch twigs about half or three-quarters of a yard long, the leaves still remaining on one end, but bare where they were tied together, and about two inches in diameter. My tormentors armed themselves with these weapons, and made an onslaught in no tender manner upon my defenceless body, flagellating me back, front, and on both sides, turning me round and round, to get at every corner. More steam was raised during the process, until I felt as if I were in a steam-boiler without a safety-valve, with a pressure of a hundred pounds to the square inch, and ready to be blown out through the roof at any moment. Still every few minutes a pail of cold water streamed hissing from my poor scalded flesh. My man with the mighty arms was, I understood, undergoing the same process in another place. There was no help for me but in myself. All my lost energies had returned in fresh vigour; I felt ready to grapple with a bear, and was by this time as

elastic and buoyant as I had before been nerveless. Watching an opportunity, as one of my executioners was fetching a fresh pail of cold water as a prelude to another flagellation, I discharged my foot at his stomach. He rolled down the steps, taking the legs from the other, and they both lay sprawling together on the floor. This was my time. Rolling myself carefully but speedily down the steps, I jumped to my feet, and rushed into the middle room. The men followed me, laughing.

"Ah! Heaven be thanked, your honour is strong now."

"And clean," I said.

"Yes; clean as new milk."

At any rate, I was as red as a boiled lobster. I felt capable of beginning my whole journey over again. A short time spent in drying with towels, cooling, and dressing, in the outer room, completed the performance. It had lasted one hour, and I left the bath strong, fresh, and vigorous, with a delightfully happy and soothing sensation creeping over me, as the blood danced and coursed with a pleasurable swiftness through my veins.

The Russian bath is a great fact. The whole people, rich and poor, are continually undergoing a process more or less similar to what I have described. The Russian people are said to be dirty and filthy, yet the bath is religiously attended to. This is one of the great Russian questions: How *can* people who plunge and steam themselves in the bath, as they do, be dirty? But "give a dog a bad name," &c. If

the Russians are so dirty as some books tell us they are, it must be that their bodies contain clay in the raw; so the more they rub, the dirtier they are. But the truth is that the higher ranks are scrupulously clean in clothes and person, and the persons of the lower classes are cleaner than those of the inhabitants of some favoured lands where baths are almost unknown. Yet the Russian has too much of a good thing, or rather spoils a good thing by his own way of using it.

The constant broiling, steaming, and flagellating gives a pale sickly yellow hue to the complexion of the young, and ultimately enfeebles the whole constitution. On the other hand, considering the description of food used by the great bulk of the Russian poor, but for these baths the stench from their bodies would be as unbearable as that from the African negro. As it is, it is any thing but pleasant (especially in fasting-time). But for these baths, one could not with a settled stomach sit behind a drosky-driver. The great mass of the Russian poor never touch soap nor water except at the bath. Workmen, artisans, peasants, shopkeepers, and even merchants, with their wives and families, use very little intermediate cleansing. They eat, work, and sleep, without washing hands or face until the regular bath time. But at this time you may see an entire population on the move, going to bath with small bundles of clean clothes, soap, towel, and birch-broom. Large public and smaller private baths are in the cities and towns. Every village—even the smallest hamlet—

has its bath for the people. The great mass in towns are accommodated in monster establishments erected by private individuals. They have steam-engines for pumping water, and a host of attendants. One large part is devoted to the poor, and is separated for the sexes. This part can accommodate three hundred or four hundred at once in each establishment, and the charge is a penny for each person. Other parts are suitable for select parties; and luxurious family or private rooms can be had at proportionate prices, from eighteenpence to six shillings. From these baths, where they are born, thousands of illegitimate children are transferred to the foundling hospitals. Other infants are taken there by their mothers as soon as possible after birth. On the evening before marriage the bride is taken to the bath by a band of her maiden companions, each armed with such a birch as I have described, and there she is forced to certain confessions under a torrent of light blows. After a death, all the remaining household must go to the bath. After and before taking a journey, the bath. Before every holiday festival and Sunday, the bath. For rheumatisms, fevers, colds, and diseases of all kinds, the bath. Take from a Russian his children, his wife, any thing, but leave him his bath, and there is consolation. If the Emperor Alexander were to publish a ukase to shut up the baths, he would fall in a month. Paul's crusade against beards was bad enough, but a bath-abolition bill would smash the empire.

After my bath I found a party assembled in

the grand dining saloon waiting dinner for me. The guests consisted of six Russian gentlemen who had been in the hunt; the card-playing priest and a fellow broadbrim; Monsieur Defour, a French gentleman who rented the count's sugar-works; Pins, Saunderson, Harry, and four ladies, besides the countess and her mother.

A genuine Russian dinner on a great occasion is not quite copied by the English *diner à la Russe.* On a side-table were placed decanters containing doppel, keppel, cognac, and other spirits, and beside these lay plates of raw herrings, caviare, sardines, and small hard pieces of black bread and white. Those who desired an appetiser swallowed one or two small glasses of spirits and ate herring, caviare, or sardine. The ladies do this as well as the gentlemen. After this necessary and important preliminary, which was executed standing, fork in hand, we were all seated, and the real business commenced. Smart lacqueys in drab liveries and blue facings, with white cravats and gloves, served in successive dishes a dinner, of which, for the sake of those interested in such matters, I will give the *menu.*

Isschee, a soup made from sour cabbage, and very good when well made; beef-tea; mushroom pie, cut in slices; teegee, a fish nearly equal to salmon; cold veal, with sauce; roast beef; venison; devilled turkey; chickens; all these meats with sauces; wild fowl; game; iced cream, strawberries and cream, confectionery of many kinds, kissell (a sort of jelly), in various colours; apples and jargonelle pears (these

pears are in Russia three shillings apiece), raisins, nuts, sweets, coffee, and cigars. The wines were numerous and superb. Black bread and white, baked and roasted potatoes, Dublin and Allsopp's ales, and the favourite London porter at six shillings a bottle. The silver plate was profuse, the crockery fine china; the cookery faultless. The conversation was kept up with spirit, but only between the courses, and each course appeared ready cut up, to be served by the footmen carrying it round.

After dinner there were toasts, accompanied by speeches of a few words each, all but one from the Scotchman, a yard long, in proposing the Count and Countess Pomerin. When the company was in a good humour for any thing, the count rose, and said:

"My friends, I have designed a little performance, which I shall now introduce. It is the settlement of a small affair between me and my good friend and tenant Monsieur Defour, now present. I bet him, certain terms, that I should in six weeks tame a wild horse of his. This is the last day of the time specified, and we are within a few hours of its entire expiration. You shall judge between us. Ladies, I beg you will be so kind as to keep your seats, and let no one be in the smallest degree alarmed at what will now take place. Timossy, tell John we are all ready."

We were all sitting in the centre of the hall, with a clear space round us of considerable extent. The door opened, and a magnificent jet-black charger, of the Arabian breed, bounced into the room, blowing clouds of smoke from his nostrils. He had no bridle

nor saddle, nor any attendant. His flowing mane waved in rich masses half way down, and his tail swept the floor.

Some of the gentlemen sprang up from their seats, and the ladies screamed.

"I implore you all to sit quiet; there is no danger in the least," cried the count. "Do sit down." When we were all seated again, he said, "Come here, Nereckta, and kiss me;" and he held his arms out. The horse went straight to the head of the table and held up his great lips to be kissed. "There, now," and the count stamped on the floor twice, "go round the room and make your bow to the ladies." The horse immediately obeyed, and approaching the ladies (who all sat together), bowed four times. But there were six ladies. The count said, "Again;" but the horse refused. "In the rehearsal," said the count, "we had only four lady dummies. I must pass that part." He then gave him some sweet cake, and stamping three times, told him to go down on his knees and beg pardon for intruding on the company. The animal went gently down on one knee, and bent his head twice to the ground in great humility.

"Now, then, get up and drink to the health of all here." A tin can was handed to the count, who emptied two bottles of champagne into it, close to the horse's head. He held up his head before drinking, gave a polite neigh to the company, and leisurely drank off the champagne. The count then jumped on his back, and was carried quietly twice round the room.

"The remaining part of the play," said the count, coming off the horse, and laughing, "must be seen elsewhere. Those who have the curiosity will follow." He passed out by the door, the horse following him. We were all led through a passage to the other end of the building, where there was a broad flight of steps leading to the servants' rooms.

The count pointed to the steps, clapped the horse on the head, and said, "Go, Nereckta." Nereckta obeyed at once, climbed about fifteen steps, turned on the landing, and came down again, carefully picking his way.

"Are you satisfied, my friend," said the count, turning to the Frenchman, "or must I appeal to the judges?"

"There is no occasion; I am satisfied. It is wonderful! I have lost. Take the papers." And he pulled out a bundle of papers and handed them to the count.

No sooner had the count received them than he tore them up into shreds and scattered them in the lobby. Then, taking from his pocket a sealed packet, he handed it to the Frenchman, saying:

"Here is a new contract on more just and equitable terms. Do you take it, or must I destroy it also?"

"Certainly, count, I will take it; and I say you are generous—very kind."

"That is finished, then," said Pomerin. "Here, John" (he spoke now in English). "Where are you?"

"All right, count," said a voice from the crowd of lookers-on, in the genuine London cabby tone; and a smartly-dressed groom, in racing trim, stepped forward. He was, as to size, a boy of ten, but when you looked into his face you could read five-and-thirty. A neater, more trimly-made little fellow I never saw. He approached and patted the horse, who seemed to welcome him as a dear friend.

"Now, John, just show them what he can do in the other way," said the count. "We have seen the lamb, now we will see the lion. Only once over and back, John."

"All right, count."

We followed to the lawn in front of the house, which was lighted up by pine torches, and found for what purpose the hurdles and various other structures had been put up in the lawn. The little groom (who was master of the count's stud of best horses) put a racing saddle and bridle on Nereckta, and sprang on his back. Then commenced a scene of galloping and leaping, the horse flitting round the park like a swift bird. This ended the performance, and when we returned to the house to finish the evening the ladies had retired.

It appeared that Defour had obtained a renewal of his lease or contract, on ridiculously low terms, from the count's German steward, who very likely pocketed a nice thing by the transaction. Saunderson opened the count's eyes to this, as well as many other tricks of the steward. He endeavoured to get the Frenchman to give up his lease, but in vain. Defour,

civilly obdurate, refused—until one day the count found him and some of his men cruelly lashing and training a stubborn young black horse. He had been trying to tame this horse for some time, and was only making the animal worse. The count told him so, and said it was his want of skill, not the fault of the horse, that caused the failure. Now the Frenchman's weak point was an overweening opinion of his own skill in horse-flesh. The count, intentionally or not, touched this point so hard, that a bet was made, the end of which we have seen. The count knew the horse, and admired him; and, in conjunction with his English groom, he had soon conquered the temper and gained the affections of the animal, which was then found to be peculiarly tractable and gentle. Training commenced; many mock dinner-parties had been held, and the horse gradually taught the various movements we had seen. The result was, two hundred roubles to the groom, the horse became the property of the count, and the Frenchman got a new lease on more equitable terms. I saw another exhibition of the same nature in a gentleman's house near St. Petersburg, but it was somewhat less successful. There is nothing that a young Russian noble enjoys more than an affair of this kind, when horses are, as they commonly are, his peculiar and passionate delight.

CHAPTER XI.

HOUSEKEEPING IN THE INTERIOR.

ALTHOUGH Count Pomerin desired to entertain me for an indefinite time as his guest, the proposed length of my stay in his neighbourhood made it desirable that I and my family should rather establish ourselves as his neighbours in a house of our own. A sufficient dwelling-place we found close to the count's residence, and looking into a large sloping court-yard, at the bottom of which was the cotton-mill, with other factory buildings. Pins's house and the steward's office flanked this yard, which was large enough for the exercising of some thousand soldiers. On the left of the factory, in the hollow, was an old primitive corn-mill, driven by a couple of water-wheels. More to the left lay the lake, and the road passing between the end of the lake and the corn-mill ran northward, to join at the distance of thirty or forty miles the main highway.

My house was of brick, and originally built as a dwelling for the steward. It was of two stories, the under one being used as a general store or "econom" for the estate—a sort of "tommy-shop." No other

store or shop was within many miles, and of this one the steward had entire control, buying, selling, and charging as he chose; an arrangement any thing but profitable to the peasantry. A gateway led from the road to the court, and a broad flight of steps, half in-doors and half out-of-doors, enabled us to reach my dormitory. The house was well situated for commanding a view of much that went on about the factory. An additional recommendation to me was the fact that the stanavog, or district inspector and magistrate, lived in a wooden house next mine, and that from my gable windows I could see into his court-yard. It was there that he administered justice with "the stick," and there also was a rude prison or lock-up. As I wanted to see life in the interior, had heard so much of the "stick" by which Russia is said to be governed, and had seen so little of it—perhaps for want of opportunity—I felt rather glad that this shortcoming in my experience was about to be supplied.

Although my goods and chattels had been sent off from Moscow before we left that city, they did not arrive till six weeks after us, our six rooms being in the mean time partially furnished from the count's own house. The things came, however, and for a wonder came unbroken, which is saying a good deal when it is understood that amongst them there was a set of Wedgwood's best dinner ware, besides two sets of imperial china and porcelain, and a lot of crystal. The count had ordered his steward to supply us with every thing we might want in horses,

provisions, and necessaries from the stables and "econom." The horses I accepted, the provisions I preferred to pay for; but I soon found that the count's orders were one thing and the steward's fulfilment of them was another. For instance, when horses and conveyances were wanted, this gentleman picked us the worst cattle and the oldest carriages he had. For provisions he charged three hundred per cent more than it cost us to buy them from the peasants. The peasants he sent us as servants were the worst-behaved and dirtiest he could discover. Clearly enough we were looked upon by this German as interlopers, spies, and what not, for which reason he took every means that he dared safely employ to annoy us. Some things, beyond our friend's control, were very cheap. As matter of curiosity, to illustrate the drawback to the poor of want of market for the articles of their own raising, here are some comparisons of price:—A turkey cost in the interior tenpence, in the capital four-and-sixpence; a goose, in the interior ninepence, in the capital three shillings; a fowl, interior, fourpence-halfpenny, capital, fourteenpence; beef, three-halfpence a pound in the interior, fourpence-halfpenny in the capital. Of eggs, the price in the capital was five times our price here of a penny-three-farthings for ten. Butter was in the country threepence-halfpenny, in the capital ninepence a pound; and a sucking-pig that in the interior cost sevenpence, in the capital cost three shillings and sevenpence. The peasants, rearing all these and many other articles on their allotments, and having

no near market for them, were glad to get any thing in the shape of money. Wool, flax, feathers, they carried to the fairs, many miles distant, or sold to the natives who travel round in search of such articles. These men will then take them to the large fairs, and sell them to merchants, who again re-sell them to other and larger dealers, by whom the goods reach Moscow, Odessa, or St. Petersburg, after passing through four hands.

A main dependence of a household is upon the servants. An English mistress wants them "quiet, honest, clean, tidy, and respectful," but finds them of another sort in Russia. As a domestic servant the Russian serf, particularly the woman, is noisy, impudent, dirty, slatternly, thievish. One good English servant is worth a whole regiment of them. If you choose, madam, to live up to the eyes in filth—if you submit to be plundered to your stay-laces—if you pay your maids ten times their rightful wages in presents—if you never look into the kitchen, and give the whole establishment entire command of the cellar and larder, you may live to be tolerated in your own house.

We began our housekeeping with four, a key-keeper (housekeeper), a cook, a room-girl (housemaid), and a footman. They came in a body, accompanied by the "starosta," and sent by the steward, who had the control of all the human chattels. My wife looked at them as she would have looked at doubtful meat, for she had much Russian experience in such affairs.

"Take them away, starosta; I must have better than these."

"But surely, madame," said the starosta, "you will try them. If they don't do well, tell me, and they shall be whipped; or beat them yourself—it is all the same."

"No, I will not have these. You have picked out the dregs of the village. Get me others directly, or must I speak to the count?"

"I hear and obey, madame. Get out, you pigs! I will bring younger ones, madame. Forgive me, but the steward sent these."

This batch was succeeded by another, and then by a third, which last was deemed admissible. When they had shaken themselves into their places, we found they had all had some experience in the duties expected of them. But each stuck with amusing firmness to a single duty. When the cook had cooked she lay down on a bench in the kitchen, and slept out the rest of the day. When the room-girl had dusted the chairs and tables, she also squatted on the floor in a corner and slept. When the lad had waited at table, and carried the dirty dishes to the kitchen, he rolled himself up double in a corner of the lobby. When any thing was wanted from any of them, they had to be roused up with kicks or cold water; shaking was but a vain exercise. The key-keeper not having any keys to manage (there was not yet a lock in the house except on my wife's drawers), slept placidly, and snored the sleep of the just all day and all night on one of our sofas, as

rather a more dignified place than the floor for a key-keeper. Beds they had none, and beds they did not want, nor ever had wanted. The breakfast dishes were put on the table for tea just as they had been taken away dirty the evening before.

"Cook, why did you not clean the tea-things?"

"Madame, I am cook. I cannot clean dishes."

"Polygaie, why did *you* not clean the dishes?"

"Madame, I am room-girl, and dust."

"Evan, why did you not do it?"

"Madame, I am lacquey, and wait."

Of course the key-keeper was miles above this. So they all went off to their lairs, and we sent for a dish-washer.

At the end of the week the floors wanted washing, and a question arose who was to do it. The cook cooked, the room-girl dusted, the lacquey waited, the scullery-maid washed dishes, and the key-keeper did nothing but sleep. My wife was making up her mind to be her own key-keeper, as she thought the sleeping on the sofa might be accomplished by herself if necessary, but she could not scrub the floors. The others, even on promise of an addition to their wages, refused in a body. "Too much work, madame. Cannot be done." They all evidently were working for the "stick," but we did not believe in the "stick." The upshot was that four outsiders were hired to come once a week to wash the floors.

It was the same with washing clothes and getting up linen. A woman was engaged for the one duty, and

the other had to be done by my wife, because no one could be got who knew what it meant.

"Evan, why the deuce have my boots not been cleaned these three days?"

"If you please, baron, I am lacquey, not boot-cleaner," said Evan. So he rolled himself up again in his corner, and was snoring immediately.

A boot-cleaner was, of course, hired; then a man to cut and fetch wood, and another to cut it into small pieces and keep the fires up.

Thus had my establishment increased in one week to thirteen souls. The wages of these people were small, it is true, but higher wages had no charm to induce extra exertion. Let the ladies of England think much of Betty and Jane; complain less, use them well, speak kindly to them, and one Betty will do more—and more faithful—work than all my thirteen Russians, with thirty thirteens to that. So says my wife, who remembers faithfulness and friendship in brisk English maids. Now all these Russian servants must be fed, and that means something; not that their nominal food is much, but that the real consumption in the way of theft is beyond calculation. Say that the nominal power of a Russian servant's capacity for victual is ten, the real indicated consumption will be two hundred and fifty.

At the end of the first week our key-keeper rolled off the sofa, rubbed her eyes, yawned, and then said:

"More money, madame, to get coffee and tea and sugar from the 'econom.'"

"Do you mean to tell me that those stores are all gone?"

"All gone, madame."

"What on earth have you done with them? Tell me."

"All eaten up, madame, by the baron and the children and yourself."

"What! twenty-eight pounds of sugar, three pounds of tea, and eight pounds of coffee consumed in a week by my family?"

"Yes, madame. No one has touched them. They cannot last for ever, you see. What's to be done?" And she shrugged her shoulders in the usual manner.

"I will tell you what's to be done. You are to take yourself off instantly."

The key-keeper was accordingly bundled out. The next was no better, nor the next; and the alternative forced itself on madame, "I must be key-keeper myself."

This did not much mend the matter. The sugar, tea, and coffee continued to vanish, nobody could tell how, and we continued to spend for a few weeks at the rate of three pounds a-week for these three articles. To have preserved them untouched, it would have been necessary to have placed them in the centre of the big room, and station a guard of soldiers (not Russian soldiers, who are themselves the biggest thieves in the world), a file of Napoleon's old guard, to watch them night and day. Keys and cupboards were got, but these did not much help to

abate the evil. The thieving still went on, and my wife was at her wits' end.

"Have you examined their boxes, my dear?"

"No, but it must come to that again. I thought when I left those experienced and incorrigible thieving Petersburg servants this would not be necessary. I did not mind emptying their boxes once a week, but these innocent country peasants—I cannot imagine them guilty. However, I must try them. Come and protect me, for the first time."

It was after dinner when we proceeded to the kitchen. The whole establishment was fast asleep, squatted and rolled up in various corners. The kitchen a picture of dirt and confusion. A little cold water roused our friends up.

"Titania, give me your key," said madame.

"It is lost, madame."

"Give it me instantly. There it is, hanging at your side. If you don't be quick, I shall send for the starosta, and have you whipped."

The key was handed over, and the box opened. This innocent peasant girl's box contained a canvas bag filled with pieces of lump-sugar, paper parcels of tea and coffee, needles, pins, buttons, hooks-and-eyes, pieces of tape, laces, bits of soap, candles half burnt, children's toys, sealing-wax, pens, note-paper, and a host of other small articles, all of which my wife identified as hers, and coolly carried off, leaving me sentinel over the others, every one (except Titania, who had been found out) vociferating innocence, and taking Heaven to witness that hands and boxes were

entirely clean. Titania was grovelling on the floor at my feet, begging pardon and mercy. The detective returned and opened at leisure every box in its turn, carrying away from each the stolen contents, as she had done with the first. Every box was found with as much in it, and some boxes had more in them, than Titania's.

When the whole mass of recovered property was spread on my large table, it was a wonder to behold. I do not relate this as an extraordinary fact. The habit of stealing and pilfering is so constant and universal, that an honest house-servant in Russia is as one grain of wheat in a ton of chaff. They will nearly all steal while you are looking at them, and swear by the saints they are innocent as lambs. The peasant-women go from the interior to the capitals, speculating not so much on extra wages, but on opportunities of plunder when they get into service. At first they are content with small nibbling, but some of them can make a clean sweep too.

An Englishman in a government situation, a friend of mine, and as good a fellow as can be, went to bed lately, and when he and his wife got up at seven o'clock his four rooms were peeled clean to the walls, his servants were all gone, and every thing was gone: carpets and curtains, clothes and furs, plate, knives and forks, two watches, and money. He was left in an empty house, robbed to the value of three or four hundred pounds; and all this was done by a female servant or two. No man was connected with the robbery. The thing is so universal

that no one either gives or asks for a recommendation with servants. You must take your chance, and to change servants where all are so much alike is utterly useless. My wife at first changed often; I have known her have a fresh set every week—sometimes twice a-week. At last, however, she found it was better "to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of;" and she adopted the plan of frequently examining all the boxes at unexpected seasons, recovering her property, and putting it back into its right place without saying a word. She had become used to this in the capital, but had expected better things from unsophisticated peasants, and was much hurt at finding her mistake.

A Russian master or mistress would have sent every soul to be whipped, and we were next door to the yard, where each, without ceremony, trial, or delay, would have received fifty to one hundred lashes on the bare back, women and men alike. But an Englishman does not believe in "the stick."

It is possible to find instances of servants remaining for years in one place, being peculiarly adapted for its work, and managed necessarily with an enormous amount of forbearance. Even after they have been treated for years with the greatest kindness, and admitted to intimate familiarity as one of a family, a hasty word is spoken, they get an offer of a change of place, and off they go in a moment. Your child may be dying, your wife helpless—so much the better for them. All your years of kindness, forbearance, and generosity are gone with a breath, and you are

left to feel, what many travellers have had to remark, the deficient power of gratitude in the raw Russian. The sentiment is, indeed, almost unknown. And is it not easy to account for this? Think of the treatment the masses are used to receive from those above them; the tyranny of every rank to its inferior step by step; the iniquitous system of forced labour or serfdom;—is this not enough to fix on the poor Russian's mind the idea that every act of kindness is done purely for the advantage of its doer, that there is some interested motive in it? Therefore, though they accept kindness greedily, as much as you can bestow, they give few genuine thanks. They are not yet grateful even for the Emancipation Act. Thanks may be on the servile lips, the receiver of good may kiss your hand, go down on his knees and lick the dust off your feet, but not one spark of a true generous gratitude is in his heart.

There is one class, however, which can be fairly trusted for honesty in all things but bargaining. They are the adherents of the "old faith," the "starrie verra." I could wish to give a sketch of the history of this old sect and its creed; but having, as to its history, no certain sound by which to go, I will speak only from my own experience and observation. I know that though the sect is proscribed, the members of it are devotedly attached to their old system, and deem the present orthodox Russian Church an awful departure from the primitive faith and practices. They deny the emperor's claim to be head of the Church; they believe to any extent

in witches; fast and do penance; lacerate and scourge themselves in a most determined manner. They meet in secret—at night generally—and their numbers are greater than is supposed. Some high personages, they say, secretly belong to them, and submit to dreadful midnight penance for their sin of outward subserviency to the modern heresy. People of the old faith are distinguished by grim gravity and opposition to all dancing or light amusement. Above all, they do not directly steal, although I have heard it said that, as merchants, some of them are the greatest of all rogues. These fanatics remind me in some respects of the old rigid Cameronians, who thought that the killing of Archbishop Sharp was not a murder. I should be sorry to place them on a level with these old enthusiasts in many things, but the emperor would stand a fair chance of a heavenly crown if the starrie verra had its will; and it hates the present religion of the empire as much as ever the Cameronians hated prelacy.

I had not been long in this place when I became acquainted with the fact that a community of this old faith existed in the neighbourhood. An old wooden building like a Druid temple, set in the side of a hill among trees and rocks, was pointed out to me as their midnight conventicle. This was said to be presided over by a woman, a priestess, who never left the temple night nor day. Such an arrangement was clearly prohibited by law, which does not tolerate women-priests; yet here she was; and from the perfect immunity which she and her associates seemed to

enjoy, I suspected that many of the gentry and people of the valley either shared or sympathised with their opinions.

I had seen a roving fanatic in the village collecting peasants round him, and shouting to them like a street-ranter. He never wore any thing on his head or feet even in the coldest frost, and his other clothing was indecently scant. He was often drunk, and I have seen him in that state lying helpless on the ground. This fanatic was esteemed a prophet, and listened to as such. He carried a long pole, and danced some holy dance to words of high prophetic omen.

As neither I nor any of my family went to any church, old or new faith, we were suspected to be something dreadful. I had no images in my house, except one brought by the servants and hung up in the kitchen. I had refused to allow a band of priests to go through some mummery by way of blessing the house at my first going in. This was not at all satisfactory, and strange rumours and doubts of my Christianity went about, even to the length of suggestion that we were a household of Turks or Mohammedans, the abomination of abominations to a Russian, and more especially a starrie verra. As I had no way of publicly exhibiting my faith but by my works, I was obliged to let them all talk as they liked. The tide, however, was soon to turn, and I was to get credit for more sanctity than I deserved.

After my household goods arrived from Moscow, the crockery was cleaned and nicely put away in a

handy place for particular occasions. For common service we used the base earthenware of the country. What crockery can have to do with the starrie verra may be a matter of astonishment, but it has much to do with it, as my poor wife found to her cost. She loves good Wedgwood, and I had been obliged to bring a capital set for twenty-four from England to St. Petersburg, never dreaming that it would have to travel yet another fourteen hundred miles. I had proposed to sell it, but she answered with decision, "Don't be foolish. It must be packed." So packed it was, and here it stood, as I have said, ready for use. One day she said to me, "Tell me, my dear, what 'starrie verra' means."

"Starrie, old; verra, faith—old faith. Why do you ask?"

"Because a woman has come for the cook's place, and she says she is a starrie verra, who will not steal. Shall I take her?"

"Certainly, by all means; an honest cook is a gold mine."

The woman came. She was of a staid, stern, even gloomy expression, about thirty-five years old, was clean, and had a cowl on her head which hid every hair. All the time that she remained with us, I had no evidence that she was not entirely bald. From this maid's armpits to her heels were two straight lines, so that her waist was quite as mysterious as her hair. Except for the gloomy expression on her face her features were good, and her eye—or I was much mistaken—showed a kind heart, spite of

her habitual grimness. She never smiled, jested, or laughed; but we soon found that she was valuable. Her work was always done to the minute, and done well. We became rather attached to Anastasia; and while keeping her grim gravity unrelaxed, she evidently softened to the younger members of the family. They, again, took amazingly to the stern old lass. Give me a child for finding out character covered up, whether in smiles or gloom. The children find it out; ay, and they bring it out. A terrific breaking of pots in the kitchen had taken place five minutes after Anastasia's first installation. Mugs, jugs, cans, brown pots, plates and dishes of various dimensions, she smashed into atoms at once, saying, "Unclean! unclean!" As this was a very likely fact, and the things were of little value, she was rather encouraged than otherwise in this new work of reformation. "A new broom sweeps clean," seemed true enough of her. Every article in the kitchen, iron, wood, and earthenware, had been horribly defiled, was pooganie (unclean), was smashed and thrown out. She asked nobody's leave, nor did she stand on the manner of doing it, but did it. A new outfit was obtained from the "econom;' and as her religion suffered her to eat with none of us, a complete set of dishes was got for her own individual use. No one durst lay a finger upon these on any pretence whatever. If touched, they were smashed the next moment. Nor would she for the world touch food out of any dish or vessel which had been used by another. If a dog got into the kitchen, and put his nose (as dogs generally do)

into half-a-dozen pots and dishes, whether these were her own particular vessels or not, they were smashed.

The following conversation ensued one evening upon hearing one of these dreadful smashing bouts in the kitchen:

"What noise is that, my dear?"

"O, it is Anastasia breaking a few dishes. Never mind her."

"Never mind her! I wonder you allow that old fanatic to go on so; she will ruin us in pots alone." (And assuming a fierce look), "I shall go and turn her out this moment."

"No you won't. Listen: this woman is a jewel. She breaks a few dishes, it is true, but her religion seems to demand it. I suppose it also tells her to be honest, for she is so. You told me not to examine her box, but for all that I have done so many a time. She always leaves the key in it. It contained nothing but an old Bible, in the old church characters, which I could not read, and a few clothes. Not a vestige of my property could I ever find. That is not all: the other servants either don't, or cannot steal by a hundredth part as much as formerly. Her breakage does not amount to a tithe of the old robberies. Now say shall she be turned out?"

"Certainly I prefer the smasher to the thief."

"Now come to the kitchen, I hear she has gone out. I wish to show you something."

We went to the kitchen, and there my wife pointed out to me that all the utensils in which any food was left or kept had a cross made of chips laid

across the top. Bread was in course of making, and the sponge was set. On the top of the dough a cross was also drawn with a blunt edge.

"Now," said madam, "all that is to keep the witches out of the food. Yesterday she told me that during the previous night the cat had been very uneasy, and had gone mewing about for a long time. She got out of bed, and drew the edge of a knife three times round the cat's head, after which it was quiet and went to sleep directly. She had cut the throats of the witches which were tormenting the cat, and had fastened themselves round her head." When we got back to our own room, my wife continued: "That is not all: she is absolutely a darling of a griffin. She has so established your character for sanctity, that in fact you are now supposed to be a priest in your own country, and she defends the interests and the character of the family on all occasions. She does all my marketing now with the peasants, and that alone halves my expenses."

"But, my dear, how can she possibly have represented me as a priest, the last thing I wish to be thought?"

"Well, I was coming to that. Put up that book and listen patiently. I got it all from the Countess to-day when I was there; and when I explained some things which puzzled her, she laughed immoderately. You know what kind of a character we all got, because we did not go to church, nor have images to adore, nor cross ourselves. We were thought dogs, who worshipped no God at all; and you confirmed

this impression by saying you worshipped, like the Athenians to whom Paul preached, an unknown God. I daresay our lives would not have been safe; but Anastasia has put it all right. I sent her amongst the peasants to buy provisions. They told her that we were dogs, and that it was a shame for her, a starrie verra, to live with such dreadful people. 'Ah!' she said, 'you are a parcel of fools; you don't know them as I do. My master is a great priest in his own country. Don't I see him twice every week performing the services with robes, and dresses, and grand curtains, in the large room? Don't I see him reading and praying out of five large books full of saints and pictures every day? Don't they all sing and chant every evening before going to bed? Did ever any of you see them dance like you fools? Don't I break as many unclean pots as I like, and madame is never angry, but says, That's right, Anastasia, keep things clean.' This counter-blast has been going on some time, and now the Countess says we are looked upon with different feelings; in fact, our cook has established you in the veneration and good opinion of the people. Besides, you know just dealings with them may have had some effect also."

"But what does it mean? How do I perform the services twice a-week?"

"Have you not, like a captain at the North Pole, been setting the children to perform *King Alfred*, and recite pieces, and sing? Have I not got dresses made for them? Have you not painted a scene (O,

how dreadfully bad!); and is not this our amusement every Tuesday and Friday?"

"And the five great books of saints from which I read and pray; can they be the four volumes of the *Illustrated London News?*"

"Yes, and the large *Illustrated Family Bible.* She has seen the pictures, and how carefully we handle them, not to spoil the grand binding. So what with the acting, reciting, singing, reading, and family prayers, it is all settled in Anastasia's mind that you are a great good man; but particularly the book of pictures has fixed this conclusion in her mind."

A great sacrifice had yet to be made to the starrie verra. Cooking-pots might be made of the coarsest earthenware, or porcelain, it mattered not; if they were defiled, either they must go, or the cook would go; that was the fixed alternative.

We had given a party. Saunderson was there, Defour was there, Pins was there, the Count and many others were there. Each gentleman had brought his favourite four-footed companion and protector. Some had two. These dogs were, during supper, lying about the room. I thought, in common hospitality, it was but right I should feed my friends' dogs, and I proposed to give them a great feast of broken victuals before they were taken from the room. No sooner said than done; plates, dishes, tureens—of our choice Wedgwood—were filled with what dogs like, and put before our expectant neighbours. It was delightful to see how the strong fellows wagged their tails,

and lapped their jaws, and crunched the bones, and relished the dainty feast; but in the midst of all, to our great grief, the starrie verra opened the door and looked in for some orders. She saw the defilement; her face assumed a more grim look than I had ever seen on it. In a moment I felt that my wife's pet crockery was tried and condemned past all reprieve. Dogs had defiled it. Madame looked at me with a what-shall-I-do expression; and I replied by another look of take-it-easy-and-let-it-go. It was a sore struggle, but prudence triumphed over crockery. The servant was invaluable. It was not she but the crockery that might be replaced. But O! is there a lady in England who does not sympathise with my poor wife as, immediately after the removal of the cloth, she heard the smash of her Wedgwood going on in the kitchen? She sat still, and winced hard, and pressed her lips together at each smash. Meanwhile, however, I had told her grief to our guests, and each crash was provoking laughter, in which she at length, catching the infection, joined long and heartily. The starrie verra remained with us until we left that part of the country. Then her grim countenance relaxed, and she cried bitterly at parting. She was the only honest servant we ever had in Russia.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE WHITE VILLAGE.

BEFORE 1863, when the act was to take effect, who could know the results of the emancipation of thirty millions of serfs? While among the peasants, journeying from one part to another, about the time of the first edict on the subject, I tried to ascertain what value the peasants themselves set on the promised boon; but I could not find my way far into the mass of their ignorance and apathy.

One day I had the following conversation with a serf who brought me a message:

"Your name is Evan Vasiliovitch; to whom do you belong?"

"I am the serf of Karmoritch."

"How many are you?"

"Two thousand souls are we."

"You will all soon be free."

He looked at me from the corners of his eyes, and drawled out,

"Yes; if God and our Father wills."

"It will be better for you, Evan; will it not?"

"God knows, baron. How should I know?"

"How much obrok do you pay?"

"Thirty roubles a-year."

"Do you pay it in work or in money?"

"I work four days a-week in the sugar-fabric, to pay the obrok, passport, and taxes."

"How much are the passport and taxes?"

"About three roubles and a half, besides other things."

"That is thirty-three roubles and a half you have to pay; and for this you have to work four days every week in the sugar-mill?"

"It is so, baron; and hard work it is."

"When you get your freedom, you will not require to pay obrok, or to work for it. Your time will be your own to cultivate your ground. Will that not be better for you?"

"God give it; I don't know. But I am tired of working."

"How much land have you?"

"Three and a half deciatines" (ten acres).

"Well, that is plenty to keep your family on. If you spend all your time on it and pay no obrok, is it not plenty?"

"I don't know, baron; but I am tired of working in the fabric."

"Now tell me, Evan, what do you intend to do when you get your freedom? Will you remain here and work your ground, or will you seek bread somewhere else?"

He turned his eyes first up, then down, then on both sides, as if seeking to evade an answer; gave the peculiar peasant's shrug, and slowly muttered,

"I shall sleep, baron."

"And after you have slept, Evan?"

"I shall eat, baron."

"And after you have eaten, Evan?"

"I shall sleep again, baron."

"And when the black bread is gone; and when the pig and poultry are all eaten; and when the potatoes, carrots, and cabbages are all eaten; and when there is no firewood nor pasture,—what will you do then, Evan?"

"Then I will tell you, baron. Now may God give you health; and thank you for the tea-money you are going to give me. Give you good-day!"

I believe this is the case of nearly all the serfs. The condition of many of these people at this time may be judged from the following account of himself I got with difficulty from a peasant who worked in a cotton-mill:

"I earn four roubles (twelve and sixpence) a month. My time is all spent in the mill—from five o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night. My wife and two daughters work on the fields belonging to the baron five days every week in summer. They get no wages. In winter they do any kind of work required of them by the steward. My son (who is seventeen years old) works also in the mill, and gets two roubles a month. We have three deciatines of land. It is our own; so is the house. We can only raise a few potatoes, cabbages, and carrots. The women do this work. We keep a pig, and we have some ducks. We eat them,

We get black flour from the econom (the steward's tommy-shop); this is deducted from our wages. We pay no obrok from these wages, nor taxes. Our work is counted for this: the steward manages all that. Somehow I am always in debt to the steward's office. I have worked ten years in the mill, and am a good spinner. I don't know what we shall do when we get our freedom. We shall not work any more, I suppose. I may go begging; it is an easy life. I am now unfit for out-door work; but my son is able: let him cultivate the land. We are three thousand souls on this estate. A thousand nearly are away, and pay forty roubles obrok each a-year. They pay their own passports and taxes besides."

This is a sorry but true picture. Eleven pounds a-year had this man and his family to live on! For this sum the father and son gave all their time in the mill, and the mother and two daughters five days a-week in other work. In a free mill worked on the free principle, the father and son alone would be worth, and sure to receive, about sixty pounds, and the two daughters thirty; but then they could be forced to pay out of that what their master chose to exact for obrok and taxes. Many of the serfs are better off, and some are worse. The serfs belonging at one time to the crown are now free; and those possessed by the rich old families have paid five roubles obrok, and done what they pleased with their ground or themselves. Some of them are immensely rich, and could purchase their freedom at fabulous sums; but great nobles sometimes choose to retain them, either

as a reserve-fund in case of need, or from a foolish vanity in the possession of a serf worth half a million roubles. Such instances, however, are by no means common.

Intelligence reached us one day that something serious had happened among the serfs at a place called the White Village, twenty miles away. I started off to the place in company with my Scotch friend Saunderson, who was then my visitor. The White Village was a village of considerable size, and the houses seemed to have once been of a more comfortable class than any I had seen in those parts. Now it was a most desolate picture of extreme penury and woe. Soldiers were in possession of every door; Cossacks patrolled the streets, and the adjacent roads, so that but for my friend's clever assistance we should not have been allowed to enter. The steward's house, with all his property and stores, had been burnt down, and he himself had been murdered. His family (a wife, a son, and two daughters) could nowhere be found. Some ten peasants were dead, and many were wounded. A gang of serfs in irons, or bound with ropes, followed by screaming women—some with babies in their arms—were leaving the place under an escort of Cossacks—who were jeering the poor wretches and probing them with lances—on their way to the government town-prison; whence they would pass ultimately to the Siberian mines, no doubt.

This is the story of the outbreak:

General Obrassoff died and left his widow two

estates. This of the White Village, which had come into his possession only a short time before his death, was one; the other was that upon which my friend Saunderson served as superintendent. The lady was a person of a tender heart, who had been well educated, and mixed in the best society. At her husband's death she left the capital and its pleasures, in order to devote herself to the education of her daughter; taking with her a first-rate governess, and a little English girl as companion and English tutor. The little English girl (by name Lucy Murray) was fatherless; her mother was unable to educate her, and she was glad to give her companionship to the Russian young lady in exchange for good treatment and an education in German, French, and music.

Arrived at the White Village, which she had never seen before, the "generalshe" (Mrs. General) decided upon living there for a time. While the old family-house was being prepared for her reception she stayed in a friend's house in the nearest town. The former proprietor of the White Village had been rich, and easy with his serfs. He had possessed several estates of considerable extent lying widely separate from this part of the country, where he had never been but once; in fact, he knew very little of the White Village, except that it was his, and that the steward sent or brought him plenty of excuses for non-payment, but little money. It did not trouble him much, therefore, when the people on the estate passed to the General Obrassoff at cards or dice. He merely remarked (Madame Obrassoff

is my authority here) that if the general made no more of the pigs than he had made of them, they would not be of much use to him. The general determined, however, to make the estate valuable. It was in the same country as his other property, and would form a large addition to his income, if well handled. But soon after he had sent off a new steward, with the discharge of the old steward in his pocket, and with orders to repair the house, buy stock, and raise the obrok from ten roubles to thirty, he died. Thus madame—good, tender-hearted, compassionate Madame Obrassoff—ruled in his stead until her child's majority.

On the morning after she had taken possession, and installed herself comfortably in her large wooden house, before she had quite got out of bed, the large plot of grass which served for a lawn in front was filled with a mass of human beings, clad in the most filthy rags, waiting to pay their respects to the new owner; the old starost heading the ragamuffins with evident pride and pleasure. English rags are bad, Scotch are worse, and Irish are much worse; but Russian rags are beyond all conception. When the lady appeared on the lawn among her "souls," she was perfectly shocked by their wretched appearance; and the starost having marked with cunning satisfaction her aspect of sympathy, advanced first with a "welcome present"—a lean goose—and laid it at her feet. He then kissed her feet, and the feet of her daughter, and wished that all imaginable blessings might be poured down on their "high-born"

heads. He then said that the present he had brought was not fit to give to a stanavoy's clerk, far less to such a high-born generalshe; but it was all now left him to give, he was so poor! The rest of the ragged host advanced and followed suit, no one coming empty-handed. Some gave one egg; others a few berries or a bit of black bread; some a jug of kvass or an old paralytic hen. This one brought a starved rabbit, that one a small paper of salt or a few carrots. The speeches delivered on this great occasion by some of the elder peasants were similar to that of the old starost: "High-born lady, we are your humble slaves; forgive us for having nothing better to offer you; we are poor; look at us with the golden eye, and have pity; God give you health and long life to live among us; we are poor, but obedient; we will all die for you; it is God's truth, lady, we are poor." Many of them shed tears profusely. The kind-hearted woman wept in sympathy, and pitied the degraded beings from the bottom of her heart. How could she exact thirty roubles a-year from such people? How could she put a hard steward over them, to grind more out of them? Had this not been already carried too far?

"Starost," she said, "hear me. My husband gave orders before he died that each man should pay thirty roubles obrok. Has the steward told you so, and are you willing to pay it?"

"High-born lady, it is truth. We have been told, but God knows we cannot pay it. All we have is not worth thirty roubles each. You have beautiful

eyes to look with; see these people. Is it possible that we can pay all this large sum? Ah, lady, have compassion and be an angel, and make the obrok ten roubles, as it was before."

"Steward," said the lady, "give me your opinion."

"My lady, honoured and obeyed, it is my opinion that all this is a farce got up to deceive you. Don't believe them. They seem poor, but I suspect them to be the reverse. I cannot prove it yet, but I soon will. Follow, madame, your illustrious husband's design, and I shall pledge myself to find the obrok. I have done."

Here the whole body of the peasants (about fifteen hundred), at a secret sign from the starost, surrounded the lady, and fell on their knees howling and crying.

"My children," she said, "I pity you. It is sad to look on you, with those rags. I will not ask you to pay what you cannot pay; but I must have some obrok, and shall be content with ten roubles each, if it is paid without trouble to me. I wish to be kind, and to live amongst you happily."

The starost crossed himself, and so did the multitude. The starost thanked the lady, and with many bendings and bowings vowed that this sum should be paid by the people, if he made them sell every thing they had. They then parted; the lady rejoicing in having done a deed of mercy; the starost chuckling at the success of his trick. The new steward, finding his occupation gone, gave notice to quit, and so anticipated his dismissal.

Next day, while the generalshe was giving orders in her new house, and the French governess, the daughter, and Lucy Murray were at their first lessons, the cunning old starost and twenty other peasants, clad in good comfortable garments, and looking healthy and well-to-do, unearthed some thirty or forty very fine young horses of their own breeding and rearing, from a secret spot in which they had been hidden, and were soon on their way to the large fair in the government town, to sell them for from one thousand to fifteen hundred roubles; the greater part of which money, after being divided, was destined for their secret hoards as soon as it could be turned into hard cash (paper has no chance against bullion among the peasants). The people of this village were to a man dealers, breeders, and rearers of horses, who attended all the fairs for many hundred versts round, and only used their own land and that of the estate for the pasturage. Instead of being poor, they were the richest in the district, and none could have paid a higher obrok. But they had never paid much under the old proprietor, and they would not, if cunning could save their pockets, under the new.

The lady remained under her delusion for a year. When the time came for the obrok to be paid in, a scene similar to the first, which had been so successful, was again enacted. The winter had been severe; the summer rains had not come; the rot, or something else, had got amongst the pigs and poultry; the crops of every thing were nothing; they were all nearly starving; they could not pay any of the ten

roubles; her high-born ladyship might come and see for herself; she might take all they had, but the obrok in money they could not pay. (Not a word was said about horses.)

Again the trick succeeded. The other estate afforded means of living; this estate might improve with a little patience and kindness; and the kind woman not only forgave the whole year's obrok, but reduced it to five roubles for the next year. "Only remember, starost, this is my last step in that direction. If this five roubles each is not paid in good time, and if you assemble these people again without the money in their hands, I will sell the place and leave you. I will not struggle and fight to get my money. I wish to be kind to you, but I must live; and it is a shame to you that I have to draw all my means from other poor serfs, who are perhaps as poor as you."

There is nothing more certain than that if you give a Russian serf an inch, he will take an ell. The next year came, and the five roubles did not. The poverty trick was again rehearsed; but this time her high-born ladyship dismissed the people with pain and anger, advertised the estate for sale, and, as she had threatened, sold it. All the horse-dealing "souls" on it, their wives and children, horses, cattle, goods and chattels, became the property of a certain Gospodin Popoff, who had spent the greater part of his life in official service on a salary of some forty-five or sixty roubles per month, and who had managed to live up to three hundred roubles, and to save money enough to buy the White Village at twenty thousand roubles.

Herr Hausen—the steward whom Madame Obrassoff allowed to leave her—was appointed by Gospodin Popoff; for this steward had kept his eye on the estate ever since, knew more by this time of its capabilities, and felt chagrined at having been outwitted and driven away by the cunning old starost.

His first act indicated what was to be expected now. The venerable old starost and twenty of the principal peasants were seized on their first repetition of the poverty farce, and received a very liberal supply of "stick." The stanavog's men kept the stick going for half a day, and were well paid to lay it on hard; while Herr Hausen smiled complacently. This was the first turning of the tables, and they went on running round from bad to worse. Each serf was served with a demand for three years' arrears of obrok, passport-money and taxes, at a high rate. Failing to pay on the instant, the secret studs of horses, and the more apparent goods of every kind, were appropriated and sold without the least compunction. The peasants were not allowed to leave the village, but were driven to work on the fields. Having formerly attended to nothing but horse-dealing, they were now almost destitute of the kind of produce necessary to human life. The old and infirm had to chop wood for the steward, the children gathered oak-nuts and cut grass in the woods, for his cows and pigs; his barns, stables, and storehouses filled as those of the peasants emptied. He became corpulent in substance as they grew lean and gaunt and hungry.

A sum equivalent to the purchase-money of the

estate had already been realised; but this was not thought sufficient by Herr Hausen and his principal. They had not yet found any money; and money in hard cash there must be somewhere. Domiciliary visits had been made, the floors of the huts had been dug up, and every place the searchers could think of had been explored without success. At length, a Jew — one of those prowling sharp-featured wiry little fellows, who carry trinkets, gaudy-coloured prints, handkerchiefs, and money, to exchange for corn, flax, feathers, and other peasant produce, at a profit of eight hundred per cent or so—gave a hint to Herr Hausen for a per-centage on the money found. Measures were taken accordingly, and one day these peasants—already shorn to the bone of every thing else—were deprived of their nest-egg. Where it was found, or how much it was, I did not hear; but hard bullion to a considerable amount was transferred to the iron safe in the strong-room of the steward's house. The peasants were now poorer a thousand times than they had ever wished the kind generalshe to believe them.

What follows of the story I had partly from the old starost as he lay in his hut dying from a gun-shot wound, and partly from Lucy Murray at an after-time.

One evening, four men stood at the end of a hut shaking something in a felt hat. One of them put his hand in and drew; he told the result, and the operation was repeated. Then the four separated and took different paths through the village, saying a few

words quietly at every door. It was a cold clear night, soon after twilight, and the moon had risen in an almost cloudless sky. Just as the old starost passed the steward's gate, he met little Lucy Murray going in.

"How do you do, starost? I hope your health is good. Good-night. I must run to the house."

"Stay, maiden with the golden hair and the laughing eyes; tell me who there is now in yonder house besides the steward and his."

"Madame Obrassoff and her daughter sleep there to-night. You know we came for the last instalment of the purchase-money of the estate."

"When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning. We should have gone to-night, but it is late to begin a journey, and the horses want rest. Why do you ask, starost?"

"Listen, daughter of the English, and let my words go into your heart and remain there. Tell the generalshe from her old starost, who loves her and hers, though he has often deceived her, that she *must*—do you hear me say *must*?—leave that house in less than an hour. God dooms it, and all in it, to destruction. Now tell her soon and secretly; but as you value her life and your own, tell it to none other but her. Go, and remember my words. Good-bye, English child; and may God give you happiness!"

So the starost passed on with the Russian fiery cross.

In about an hour after this, groups of men in

noiseless felt boots went their way to the church front. Each of these men was armed with only one weapon, but it was a deadly one opposed to any thing but fire-arms—the tapore, or Russian short-axe. With this the Russian peasant can hew down trees, cut them into pieces and slabs, build houses, make windows or picture-frames, sharpen and mend pens or pencils, kill a wolf or a bear, make tables and chairs, cleave his enemy's head from the crown to the neck. These men met at the church, each with his tapore stuck in his belt and resting on his hip. As each group approached the church, every individual turned his body so as to face the holy emblems, images, and saints, the position of which he well knew, and with more than ordinary devotion bowed and crossed himself.

The starost lifted up his voice: "Brothers, many words, little deeds. Are you all ready and all willing?"

Each man drew from his back the tapore, flourished it over his head, and answered: "Ready."

"That is well. We cast lots whether it should be to-night, and the answer was, 'Yes;' we cast again, and the answer was, '*All.*' Follow me, then."

The body of men moved on, and, but for the slight crisping under their felt boots, they moved like noiseless phantoms. They were in number about five hundred. Half way between the church and the steward's gate a carriage drove up; they opened to let it pass, and looked in. Madame Obrassóff, her daughter, and Lucy, pale as spectres, and quaking

in every limb, sat inside. Every man of the murderous band uncovered his head and bowed. The old starost said, "Go in peace, kind woman and innocent girls. Thank God! they have heard my words." He little knew that Herr Hausen's two daughters and his wife were concealed in the bottom of the lumbering vehicle. Lucy had warned not only Madame Obrassoff, but the steward and his family. His son, a young man of eighteen, had stepped out on the instant, mounted a fleet horse, and galloped to the nearest town for soldiers.

Thus was the steward left alone to meet the storm he had raised. Most tyrants are cowards, and Herr Hausen did not belie the statement. When the hatchets began to beat at his doors and windows, he became at last convinced (for he had until then derided the idea) that he had raised a demon he could never lay. He fled for refuge to some wretched hiding-place, as if any place in that great house could hide him from those who were now seeking his blood. His own domestics, all of them serfs to the village, joining the assailants, soon hunted him down, and dragged him to the door, when he was commanded to give up the money he had robbed them of. With trembling limbs and pallid cheeks, he obeyed, yielded his keys, and begged on his knees for mercy. In the most abject fear and cowardly despair he offered them all he possessed, promised forgiveness, and that he would reduce the obrok—any thing, every thing, for his life. But mercy he had never shown, and mercy they did not show him.

The axes of fifty men glittered in the cold moonlight and descended on his head. Then, when he was chopped to pieces, began the work of destruction. The wines and spirits found in the house added drunken madness to the madness of ignorant despairing vengeance, and morning found the revolted serfs dancing wildly round the dying embers of what had lately been the steward's house, offices, stables, and storerooms. No thought of consequences entered their benighted heads. They had recovered the lost money, and a great deal more; they had feasted to satiety on the rich stores of the steward; best of all, they had killed their enemy as they would kill a wolf. But consequences were not slow to come. A cry of "Soldiers!" was raised. Surprised, they ran this way to be met by a volley of musketry, and they ran that way to meet another volley. Dead and wounded fell like rotten sheep. The tapores were thrown down, the peasants fell upon their knees screaming for mercy, and surrendered at discretion.

CHAPTER XIII.

WOLF-HUNTING AND TRAPPING.

AFTER visiting the White Village, I had agreed to accompany Saunderson to a place called the Little Village, which belonged to the widowed lady who had obtained from the White Villagers mercy for being merciful. The management of this estate, including a large saw-mill, corn-mill, and sugar-mill, was under the control of the intelligent gentleman whose acquaintance I had made at the hunt. The distance was about thirty miles, and, although we could have gone by a more open and safe route, we decided on the forest track, as the nearest, and as affording the best chance of sport by the way. During two preceding nights the frost had sharpened, until the snow was crisp and firm, and formed in any direction through the wood a magnificent hard road, without a track on it. Instead of shunning the wolves, which abounded in the forest, we resolved to court their company, and for this purpose carried with us a decoy, in the shape of a young pig carefully tied up in a strong canvas sack. Rifles, knives, ammunition, brandy-flasks, and sandwiches, having been put into our well-appointed sleigh, we set off, passed the church, crossed the bridge, went up the hill a little

and then striking into the forest, were soon in its labyrinths. Our driver was the starost's son, a man of about five-and-thirty, who had established himself as coachman on all my excursions. Two of Saunderson's wolf-hounds and the Count's Newfoundland dog lay at our feet, perfectly alive to the possibilities of sport.

Sleigh-driving is the one grand unapproachable unalloyed pleasure to be enjoyed in Russia. There is nothing to compare with a long furious sweep in a good Russian sleigh over hard crisp clean snow, wrapped in good furs. A great bear-skin is hanging over the back of the sleigh, and its apron, another bear-skin, covering your legs, while your feet, encased in fur goloshes, rest on a doubled-up black Siberian curly sheepskin; on your head is a fur cap as tall and straight and round as a very large English hat without the rim, and your hands are buried four-inch deep amongst the sable sleeves of your coat. As you lie easily back, thus comforted, under a clear frosty bright sky, the horses, in graceful silver-mounted harness, toss their heads, the bells at their necks tinkle merrily. The driver in high wolf-skin cap and sheepskin coat, over which he has drawn a handsome blue caftan trimmed below the arms with silver-plated round buttons as large as little eggs, and with a large parti-coloured sash bound round his waist, is a fellow all excitement, of one mind with the three wild horses, who tear on at whirling speed, dashing the crisp snow in showers from their hoofs, sometimes for a moment or two half blinding

you with the finest, cleanest, and whitest powder in the world. With these appliances, and as you see and feel them all, you know the luxury of sleigh-driving. I am not speaking of a drive through the streets of St. Petersburg, but a drive of thirty or forty miles over untrodden virgin snow through the forest, when the trees are clothed in a dense fantastic foliage of hoar-frost festooned with millions of stalactites, and when the pure bracing air as you rush through it sends the blood tingling through your veins.

Before we had quite left all evidences of traffic, we heard the sound of men shouting and laughing at some distance. Determined to see what was going on, we left the sleigh, and taking our rifles, made towards the noise. Sounds travel far in a wood through clear cold air, and we had further to go than we expected before we found several men, who in felling trees had unearthed a bear. There he stood on his hind-legs, in front of what had been his hibernating place—a large hole under an oak which had been just pulled down. He stood with his back against the trunk, and his fore-feet beating the air, and the men were amusing themselves with his antics. As he seemed to want something to hug, they stepped up close to him, and put a lump of wood covered with mat between his arms. He closed them with a growl, and gave it a hug, and tore the mat to pieces. I was astonished—only for a moment—to see the men so close to him, teasing him without fear for themselves. There was no cause for astonishment; the bear had not yet come to his senses. He was quite blind,

thin, and gaunt, his hide hanging on him like a loose garment, and his fur like that of a mangy dog. In the beginning of winter he had prepared his hole, and crept into it. There he had lain on one side, sucking one paw. There he had turned on his other side, and was fast exhausting the other paw, when his dwelling was broken open by an evil chance, and he was forced to get up and collect his benumbed and dormant faculties, among which sight seemed slow to return. He had a dismal and repulsive aspect, as he stood or advanced on his hind-legs a little way from his support, and retreated to it growling and angry. To prevent the men from torturing the poor creature to death, we put a bullet into the right place, and left the men and the bear together. The bullet saved him from a more cruel death: which is our only excuse for having shot that poor blind sleepy bewildered Bruin.

Again whirling over the snow, through the wood, the stern and cold magnificence of the scene passed all powers of description. It was evident from the division of trees that we were following some known track, though it was sometimes so narrow and circuitous that we were often in danger of collisions with the trunks of old oaks and their branches. Now and then we emerged from the trees into a wide open of perhaps one or two hundred acres, with here and there a magnificent oak, covered with hoary foliage, towering in solitary grandeur. In summer these opens have the appearance of parks artificially laid out, surrounded by dark forest on all sides. The

driver was never at a loss. "I know these trees, baron. There is no danger with such angels of horses. Noo! noo! Step out, my dears. We shall soon get among the wolves. I think I see their marks."

"Shall we try the pig as a decoy?" I said to Saunderson.

"By all means, let us have a shot at something that is not blind and helpless. I cannot get the old bear off my conscience, poor wretch."

The pig was dragged from under the seat, where he had lain very quiet, and, by dint of pinching his tail, was made to perform a solo of pig music with variations, which resounded for miles through the stillness of the forest. For some time we could discern no wolves, but at length we caught sight of two, skulking among the underwood, in a parallel line with our path, but at a respectful distance. Although we kept up the decoy music, they were shy of approaching within shot. One end of a long white cotton rope was then attached to the mouth of the pig's bag, the other end to the back of the sleigh, and as we slowly turned a bend in the track the bag was dropped behind. We slackened pace, and, as the rope ran out, the pig became of course stationary. When the rope was all run out, we stopped and got out of the sleigh to watch the result, taking our station about two hundred yards from the pig, behind a tree, with our eyes on the place where we had last seen the two wolves. The pig, meantime, finding himself in a new position, put new zeal into his music.

The wolves left the cover with springs and jumps, and soon approached the poor pig, who was in no greater danger than ourselves. As they were on the point of springing on the bag—in fact, one of them had made the jump—a sign caused the driver to move on with his horses, thus pulling the prey out of their reach, and setting them both wondering what this could mean. The wonder did not last long, for the wolves distinctly had smelt pork, and meant to dine on it.

They again approached the bag, and the bag again receded, while the most vociferous and resounding shrieks proceeded from the pig inside. The wolves made a furious run, and again the driver gave reins to the horses till he had pulled the pig nearly on a line with the place where Saunderson and I were standing, the wolves following with tongues out and glaring eyes. Both rifles went off at the same moment, and, strange to say, only one wolf rolled over. We had both fired into one. The other wolf sprang for cover, but was stopped and brought to bay by the three dogs, who very soon made an end of him, receiving in the struggle a few sharp bites from his ugly teeth.

This method of decoying the wolves is common in that part of the country, and it is not unattended with danger, for in case of a large pack being attracted nothing but fleet horses can save the hunters. We had this advantage, besides rifles and dogs, and were prepared for as many wolves as might show themselves.

"Do you hear that?" said Saunderson, as an unmistakable howling yelp was borne to us on the wind. "We have only killed the advanced guard; the pack is in full cry. Be quick; fetch in the pig, and let us drag these two behind the sleigh."

We tied the rope round the neck of each wolf, and dragged both as fast as possible, secured the dogs in the sleigh, and jumped in ourselves. Then off we sped again, wolves by this time visible on each side of us and behind us. We soon found we could sustain a pace of three feet to their two, and this cleared us of risk. All we had to do was to prevent their getting ahead of us.

Having reloaded our empty barrels and lighted our cigars, we kept watch on either side for a good shot; but it is not easy to get a good shot in a running sleigh, unless the object be stationary, large, and near.

"Mattvic, go slower, keep your eye on the horses, and pull up very gradually when I cry 'stop.'"

"I hear."

A detachment behind were now coming up in fine style.

"Slower, Mattvic."

"I hear."

We got on our knees on the seat of the sledge, with our faces to the approaching wolves, about fifteen in number; we rested our rifles on the back, and as the wolves came up Saunderson said:

"Now, take one on the left, and I'll take one on the right, and as soon as you see their teeth, fire."

"Stop, Mattvic."

"I hear."

Gradually the sleigh came to a stand. The wolves were by this time within twenty yards of us, and we could see their grinning and sharp grinders, their tongues lapping, and the light in their fiery eyes.

"Are you ready? Fire! Two down. Again! The other barrel. Ready? Fire! Other two down. Drive on, Mattvic, slowly; it will take them some time to consider of that."

The wolves all stopped, and seemed to gather round their fallen friends. A turn in the wood hid them from view. Even our enemies on the right and left flanks paused at the unexpected reports of the guns, and allowed us to proceed without molestation. We went more and more slowly, and at length stopped altogether and waited; but no more wolves came up.

"I am afraid," said Saunderson, "our wolf-hunting is over for to-day. Drive on, Mattvic; we can't help it."

"Listen, barons," said Mattvic. "We can trap them all. I'll be the pig."

"Trap them? How?"

"It is easily done. About three versts from this is Timofia Evanoffage the woodman's hut. You have only to make one turn to the right, and keep straight on, and you will reach it. He has a wolf-trap. Get all ready, and I will bring on the wolves. Never fear. Only you must give me the little horse;

he is swift and sure; I have hunted wolves before with him."

After a slight hesitation about the man's safety, which he thought in no peril of any sort, his plan was adopted. The little horse was got out and given to Mattvic; Saunderson mounted the dickey, and on we went ahead. Our man, screaming like a pig, rode back to invite the wolves to follow him into Timofia's trap. Around Timofia's house was a strong high palisade; through this there was only one entrance, by a door opening inward and hung by a pulley and heavy balance-weight; so when a wolf pushed himself through this door, it closed, and shut him into the space between the house and palisade. This space was again divided off by strong cross-partitions round the premises, in each of which was fixed a sliding panel or a drop-panel, that could be pulled up or let down from within the house. By these means the inmates could separate the wolves, and kill them with dogs, guns, or hatchets, at their leisure. I had heard of one man trapping in this manner as many as fifty wolves in a winter, besides other game, the skins of which were worth to him at least one hundred and fifty roubles.

As we approached the hut we found it of larger dimensions than we had expected, and the palisade seemed to take in a larger circumference than one hut required. We shouted, but no one answered; all was as still and quiet as if the place were uninhabited. On our entering the door through the palisade it closed with a bang, and we found ourselves in a small

enclosure with a gateway opposite leading to the back premises, but it was made fast. After thundering at it for a minute or two a small door in the gateway opened, and there emerged cautiously the figure of a man rubbing his eyes and staring through his hair. He reminded me of the blind bear. His hair, like a great mass of tangled tow, was matted over his head and face; he wore a coarse gray ragged overcoat over a gray cotton or sacking shirt and trousers, and long felt boots completed his costume. He made many excuses, and asked pardon many times for keeping us waiting, but seemed to be in no hurry to admit us until we told him that a pack of wolves might be expected, and that our horses and conveyances must be put in a place of safety. The information acted on him like a galvanic shock, and he was off into the house with a spring, through a side-door inside the gateway. We followed, stooping all the time, and were in the house. It was a man-kennel, twenty or thirty feet square, a great stove in the centre, dogs about a score lying on the floor, and men snoring on the top of the pack. The heat was suffocating, the stench was poisonous. Timofia soon roused the sleepers, pulling them off their perch by the legs, pouring water over their heads, cuffing the men and kicking the dogs. "Wolves! wolves! you pigs, and you all sleeping! Be quiet, dogs. No barking. Evan, take the baron's horses and dogs round by the back entrance to the shed. Quick! Andrea, stand by the big gate, and be ready to shut it after Mattvic gets through. Put the dogs in the third division, and

get out the guns! Ah, thank God and these barons for bringing us the wolves!"

We had no intention of being cooped up in the hut while the fray went on, and therefore took our station beside the man at the gateway, which now stood wide open for the admission of Mattvic and his little horse. In a short time all was quiet, and every necessary preparation made. Then came the howling of wolves and the screaming as of a pig, the gallop of a horse over the hard crisp snow, the rush of many small feet. The outer door in the palisade was dashed open, and Mattvic, followed in half a minute by the whole pack, rushed in. The half-minute was just sufficient to enable Mattvic to vanish through the outer door into the trap. Then, as the last pressure on the door was removed, it closed with a loud sharp sound, and some five-and-twenty wolves were snared in a space not larger than twelve feet by twenty. We did not at first close the inner gateway, but, levelling our pieces at the mass of wolves now huddling themselves up in a corner, poured in two volleys in rapid succession, then closed the gate, and reloaded for another charge. The change from the air of ferocious savage daring which the wolves had displayed in pursuit of a single horseman, to abject terror when they found themselves caught in the narrow trap, was instantaneous. They were like sheep in a pen, crushing up in a corner, riding on the top of one another, lying down on their bellies, crouching and shivering with fear. It is not necessary to describe the scene of mere slaughter. Two staves were

chopped out of the gateway, that we might fire through. The drop-panels were opened, and two or three were admitted at a time to the next division; there dogs were let in on them through the adjoining trap, or they were killed by men with great bars of wood or axes; and at length, when only six or seven remained, three of the men went in amongst them, and with perfect safety despatched them. They say that a worm will turn on the heel that treads on it, but wolves caught in a trap like this, from which there is no escape, have less courage than a worm. They crouch, shiver, and die, as I saw, without one effort at self-defence or one snap of retaliation.

Timofia's hut was not only a wolf-trap, but a farm-house too: it had a large shed attached, in which a few cows roamed loose during the day, and at night were put into a byre or stable. Timofia did not clean out this byre once a day, like a good modern farmer; he only spread a little straw over the dung every morning, and allowed it to accumulate until the month of June, when the cowhouse was emptied every year. After this "mucking of Timofia's byre," you had to descend a few feet if you desired to enter it, but before the "mucking" at the end of the year's accumulations you had to ascend a few feet. In the one case you looked down on the cows, in the other you looked up at the cows. In fine, this was Timofia's manure-dépôt. It was the same with his stables. He told me that the horses accumulated so much that he had to slope a path through, by which they might get in at the doors and

climb up the slope. In the shed were lying two implements which attracted my attention; the first was composed of birch-trees cut down through the centre, with the branches chopped off within a foot of the trees. Half a dozen of these timbers, about seven feet long, were tied together with twigs of trees, the flat side up and the prongs of the branches down. Put two rough poles for shafts into this contrivance, and the Russian peasant's harrow is complete; price, nothing. Timofia told me that it did very well for his light sandy land, and that if he found it rather light sometimes he put a heavy stone on it. The other instrument was a plough, having two turned-up prongs like Dutch skates, ten inches apart, set in a rough wooden frame; betwixt them a projecting movable scoop for turning over the ground. This scoop had to be reversed every time Timofia turned his horses. He said this was a very dear implement, for iron had to be used in its construction. It cost even as much as two roubles, or about six shillings.

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO RUSSIAN VILLAGES.

With the Little Village to which I thus travelled through the wood, I will contrast another that I know, the Black Village, which shows the ordinary state of things below the surface-polish of the capital.

The Little village was unlike any Russian country village I had ever seen. Madame Obrassoff, either wisely or by good luck, had placed the whole management in the hands of a man of the right stamp; not one of the engineering comets who pass over the Russian scientific horizon, dazzling the native vision with schemes promising fabulous per-centage; not an avaricious and tyrannical Niemitz; not a crafty pilfering Russ; but a plain practical man, who could understand that his own and his employer's interests were best consulted by the material improvement of the people under his control. He had been reared on a small farm in Ayrshire, and knew all the practical shifts and expedients necessary in dealing with poor people and poor land; he possessed that indomitable energy and perseverance which has made many of the once heathery hills and boggy plains of Scotland the most fruitful farming land in the world. Cathe-

rine, Paul, Alexander, Nicholas, have all employed Scotchmen in their navies, armies, and manufactories; and these men and their descendants are to be found naturalised and prosperous in many parts of Russia.

On the estate of the Little village I found a beet-root sugar-mill, a large saw-mill, corn-mills, a vodki distillery, excellent stables, cow-houses, dairy, store-rooms, conservatory, garden, hothouses, all kept in the utmost order. The people, who looked clean and cheerful, had been cleared of the sheepish, sullen, cringing air of serfdom, and they looked me in the face. In addition to his farming operations, this good manager had established a small foundry and mechanics' shop, where both iron and brass goods were cast and manufactured. In the mechanics' shop I saw about thirty men and boys busy at work, with files, hammers, and chisels of English manufacture. There were a blacksmith's shop with five forges, a joiner's shop, a painter's shop, and a large department for the making of carts, sledges, and all kinds of wheels. It may be worth notice, that the rims of Russian wheels are made in one piece, and not in sections, as in England. Birch-trees of the proper size are cut down and trimmed to the length and thickness required, are boiled for from four-and-twenty to forty hours in a large caldron of water, and are then bent, fastened, and laid up for a year or two to season. Naves and spokes are afterwards put in by a rude contrivance, and the one joint is made very secure with iron plates and bolts. A wheel made in this way, and shod with half or three-quarter

inch iron, will last an immense time on the high road. On the soft unmacadamised roads in the interior no iron is necessary. The bearings of these wheels are so broad, that it is almost impossible to overturn the carts and carriages set on them. Thousands of such wheels were made in the Little village, and sent every year to the various markets. Besides these, I saw ploughs, harrows, and portable thrashing-machines, in course of manufacture. While I was looking over the estate, several persons from considerable distances arrived with articles for repair, and orders for new goods.

The wooden one-storied huts of the people were clean, well-built, well-thatched, and had glass windows. Separate places were provided for cows, horses, pigs, and poultry; adjoining each hut was a strip of land, composing the garden and farm of its occupant; a post with a printed board at the top, facing the main road, set forth the name of the possessor of each allotment. Although the snow on the ground made it impossible to see the state of cultivation, it was evident from the abundance in the little barns and yards, and from the general appearance of the peasants, that their old slovenly, lazy habits were giving place to industry and self-respect. On inquiry, I found that on this estate serfdom had been abolished for some years, and that the work was all done by free Russian labourers. The Lady Obrassoff had freed her serfs, and by a judicious system of encouragement and assistance was gradually making men of them.

"It is true," said the steward, "we pay more for

labour now, and we have to give them pasture-land and wood at a mere nominal price. But we get more work for our money, and by and by the small farms let out will become more valuable, and pay higher rent, although madame's income from her land has been for a time reduced considerably. The profits of her works too are already so much increased, that, on the whole, we thrive under the new system. This will not be the case with many other proprietors who have not taken care to conciliate the people, and find good work for the surplus population. At first I was much put to it for workers in the mills and shops. Many of the people having heard of high wages in Moscow and St. Petersburg, rushed there; but most of them have since returned, bringing report home that in the great towns work is scarce and living high, and that, on the whole, they find themselves better off in the Little village. I expect that as soon as the serfs are free to go where they choose, great bodies of them will rush to the capital and large towns, expecting high wages. This will glut the labour-market in places already fully stocked, and they will return to their native homes. For a time they may cause great loss and annoyance to those who possess land and works in the interior, but a few years will remedy the evil."

In the winter of 1862 many serfs, who had been spontaneously freed by their barons, rushed to Moscow. When I was in Moscow last, the city swarmed with masses of starving peasantry, seeking work, and finding none; on a late country journey, I saw thou-

sands crawling back to their villages, and begging their way.

Visiting madame at the great house, I found an English governess at home with her there, in the heart of Russia. It is a general practice among the better classes in Russia to educate their children, especially girls, at home. Placed under the charge of a chief governess, a young Russian lady is often attended by a retinue of tutors, comprising a German, a Frenchman, an Italian, and an Englishman, besides Russian dancing, drawing, and music masters. I knew a case in which a young lady's education cost her guardians two pounds a-day, for teachers' and governesses' fees alone. All must be natives of the country whose language they profess to teach, and must come, or profess to come, from their capital. Scotch or Irish men or women are tabooed either as governesses, teachers, or companions.

Having complimented madame on the improving condition of her estate,

"Ah, yes," she said; "my steward has done wonders outside, and we have not been idle inside. All things are changed, and, O, how much better it is! Formerly, when the people were my own, I was obliged to have seventeen or eighteen servants of one kind and another in the house, to wait on us four ladies, and then we were not half served. Now, we have only five hired servants, all free, besides the gardener and coachman; and from these we get better attendance. We are quieter, there is less waste and stealing, and the cost is not one-half. The

effort was at first hard work; for sometimes when we were teaching them to be free—poor things—they did not know what it meant. But we persevered, and now I am very happy. It will be a long time, however, before I get the idea out of my old head that these independent creatures are my children. Lucy" (the English governess) "and Sanya have started a school for the peasants' children. At first they bribed the little things, and even the parents, before they could get them to come; now they have too many. The young ladies also visit the sick and the aged; and Lucy has lately taken to remonstrating with the few lazy and drunken fellows in the village. About a year ago she gave me a little book of Scripture tales, of which I am extremely fond; it is in English. Well, we three Russians soon translated it into Russ, intending to get it printed for circulation among the peasants and their children. But, you see, at my last confession I had to tell the priest what I and my girls had done. He saw the manuscript, and prohibited the publication."

"And will you not publish it?"

"O no; it would be wrong. I dare not. It is as much as I can do to get the school carried on. But come here into this corner; I want to tell you about Lucy. That young lady has a strong determined character, and must have been trained in good principles. During the first three months she was in my family she effected a great change in it. You know how abjectly the peasants behave when they ask a favour or receive one?"

"Yes; they cross themselves, bow down their heads level with their heels, kiss your feet, grovel on the very ground, and kiss the earth you walk on."

"So it is, and we are so much accustomed to it that this servility seems natural. They will do it to our children when occasion requires, crawling and grovelling before them. Poor young things, what can they imagine but that the abject souls are dogs and pigs compared with themselves? I have seen one little fellow, not disposed to grant a request to a great sprawling man, join to his denial a kick in the face. Well! one day, after Lucy had been a short time here, two male peasants came in and began their prostrations before the young girls; they had a petition to make to me, and wished for their intercession. Sanya, although she is a good girl, took it quite in order, as part of her natural birthright. Not so Lucy; I was in the next room, and heard her say, 'Get up, men, and stand on your feet like human beings; I will not hear a word while you lie on the floor;' and looking through the curtains, I saw her with her fingers in both ears. Sanya said, 'Lucy dear, let them go on; they are only moushicks.' 'They are men,' said Lucy; and turning to them, she said: 'Now listen, and remember what I tell you; never go on your knees and kiss the ground to me again. I won't have it; you must kneel to God only. Stand up and make your request in a respectful manner, then I will hear you, and help you if I can.' The moushicks did not understand her; they stared in blank astonishment; they heard her words of

rebuke, but supposed that they had not been abject enough; and again cast themselves down at full length. Lucy ran into my arms and burst into tears. My Sanya could not for a long time understand it, but I hope I did; and the end is, that this abominable practice has been peremptorily abolished in my family."

Now let me describe my visit to the Black village, or, as the Russians call it, "Chernoi Deravonie."

We (for I was not alone) arrived about ten o'clock, in fine time and humour for breakfast, but saw very few evidences of life as we passed down the road between the straggling, poverty-stricken, shapeless hovels of mud and wood. On approaching the baronial residence and farm-offices, we found a small crowd of some twenty peasant men and women assembled at one of the barn-doors, where a middle-aged lady was gesticulating with direful energy to the assembled peasants. The lady was dressed in a fur wrapper, had tied her head up in a comfortable woollen shawl, had put her hands in good warm fur gloves, and wore on her feet a pair of long velvet boots lined with rabbit-skin. The peasants seemed as if they had just risen from consuming fever. They were lean, and wan, and haggard, with their hair matted, their poor clothing tattered, and their faces fixed in sullen discontent. The lady, busy among her "souls," did not appear to notice our approach. She was in too great a passion to attend to any thing but the outpouring of her wrath.

"Dogs! sons and daughters of dogs! Is this the

service you pay your baron? Pigs and swine! Is this a time to come to your work? Rats and vermin! You should have been here at four o'clock, and now it is ten. Defilement of mothers! I will have every one of you whipped. And you, starost, who ought to be an example, are the worst of the whole pack of thieves. You came here at this hour with seventeen souls, when you ought to have had forty here at four o'clock to thrash and put that rye away. Devils you all are! If my brother were well, he would punish you like sons and daughters of dogs, as you are!"

The old starost, quite unconcerned under all this abuse, merely shrugged his shoulders until they reached his ears, and held out his two hands from his sides with each finger as far separate from its neighbour as possible. If any one will put himself in this posture, and stare fixedly before him until his eyes are glassy, he will have achieved the universal deprecatory careless shrug of Russia.

"What is to be done, baroness!" he asked. "I have been fighting the pigs all the morning to get them to come, but, the deuce take it, they say they are all unwell, and cannot work. See! These are all I could get, and I had to pull them off their beds to bring them here, and, deuce take me, they are not worth bringing! But what's to be done, baroness? It's God's doing."

"Go into the barn and work, you whelps," said my lady. "Starost, drive them in, you old fool. Be quick, pig!" And here she gave the old fellow a

side blow with her gloved hand which made him stagger back. But, recovering himself, he pretended to make furious assault on the poor invalids, cuffing, kicking, and pushing them to the door of the barn, through which they huddled and disappeared.

"Now then, you old fool," said the lady, "go and bring the others."

"And who will watch these, baroness?"

"I will. Be off, thief!"

"I'll try, baroness. But they won't come."

"Begone, devil, and obey my orders!" Again she essayed to strike the man, but he started off in quick time to the village.

The language used towards these poor people did not astonish me. It is the usual style towards serfs. But it is not often that a lady is the speaker. I had been told of this baroness that she was a Tartar, and a Tartar she assuredly was. Observing us as the old starost left, she came hurriedly over to us. "Ah, bless me, is it you, my dears? Forgive me, you young ladies, I did not see you sooner. You are welcome, my darlings. How is your mother? Sanya, who is this you bring with you?" (I am introduced, and touch the Tartar's glove.) "You see what awful work we have with these serfs, sir? They think that since their freedom has been so much talked of, they are not to work any more. They are perfectly unmanageable. My brother's illness has forced me to take them in hand, and I'll let them know I am not to be played with. Now go to the house, dears, and take off your things. I will be with you as soon as I

see these peasants at work." And off she went into the barn.

The house was large and dilapidated. When we drove into the front yard we found all silent and empty. No one came to take charge of our horses, or usher us in. Our coachman could not leave his horses, one of them being rather restive; so, after hallooing for some time, I was obliged to enter unannounced. Just inside the door, and coiled up in a corner like a huge boa-constrictor, lay what I suspected was the porter, sound asleep. I gave him a shake, but this had no effect. I then kicked his legs, but he only groaned. Seeing a jug of water on a little table in the passage, I poured it on him. He started up half awake and made a fierce butt at me with his head. Fortunately he missed me, and came down on the floor head first. This had only the effect of so far rousing him that, when he looked up through his long tangled hair, and saw a baron standing over him and inquiring for some one to take the horses in hand, he jumped up and dived in at a side-door, bawling, "Gregory! Visitors!" Following close at his heels, I found him tearing at the beard of another fellow, who was sleeping on a wooden bench. Gregory being awakened and informed of what was wanted, dived into a passage, shouting, "Evan! Visitors!" Finding that I had not yet got at the right man, I again followed, and, crossing a back court, entered an outhouse filled with straw. Here I found Gregory pulling Evan by the legs out of his comfortable bed of straw. As soon as he be-

came sensible that visitors were at the door with horses, Evan seized a long pole, with an iron hook on the end of it, plunged it among the straw, and, after various failures, ultimately succeeded in fishing out by their gray ragged coats his two stable assistants. Thus reinforced, he leisurely proceeded to the front and took possession of our cattle. The battering-ram was ready by this time to act his part of lacquey, and conducted us into the house. Several female heads popped out at various doors as we passed on, indicating a numerous if not a select retinue; and our conductor presently opening a door at the end of a passage, shouted, "Visitors!" and left us on the open threshold. Advancing a few steps, we were in the presence of the lord and lady of the "souls," the pigs and dogs, vermin and devils.

The master of the house was an invalid. On one side he was nearly powerless, and he had partly lost his speech from palsy. His other side, however, was still serviceable, and with his sound arm he was flourishing a crutch at a red-shirted peasant who stood within reach: nor did it end in a flourish, for the crutch came down upon the moushick's back as I entered. I wondered the fellow did not run, but, looking down, I found that he was tied to the great arm-chair in which his paralytic lord was cushioned. The man's offence was, that in exercising the razor on his master's face he had made a deep gash. That he might be safely within reach of punishment the poor fellow was always tied to the chair while he dressed his master.

On a sofa lay a lady of portentous dimensions, enveloped in a loose robe by no means carefully arranged. Her face was hidden by a dense mass of very long hair, and in her arms she held a cat of Russian breed of wondrous size. On her knees on the floor was a young woman, who had in one hand a large comb, while the other grasped the locks of her lady, and she combed and searched and scratched, and picked away the particles of scurf which are apt to collect on all heads and all hair. Cleaner skins, cleaner heads, and cleaner hair, do not exist any where than among Russians of this class, for the process through which madame was going is a daily process, in which she and all the Russian ladies take delight. As the baron was still making wild efforts to castigate the unfortunate barber, and as his lady seemed unconscious of our presence, I turned to my companions for counsel. But the young birds were flown. I was alone in that august presence. Thinking discretion the best part of valour, I precipitately followed, and soon found my companions, by the sound of their laughter, in another room. There we waited nearly half an hour, during which time I received the following items of information regarding our baron, which, as he is one of a large class, shall be repeated.

He had been an official in a hospital department or something of that kind, at Cronstadt or St. Petersburg, for many years. It was his duty to buy and dispense the stores and necessaries. His salary was below two pounds a-week, and this seemed to suffice

for payment of the rent of a good house, and enable him to keep a good table and entertain good company. It had given his daughter an expensive education, and a dowry of more than two thousand pounds on her marriage-day. It had educated his son, a young man now nearly ready to enter the army as an officer, and had kept him in pocket-money. It had bought the Black village, and made its paralytic owner a baron. Finally, it had kept his widowed sister, the Tartar, for twelve years on the estate as factotum in the absence of the baron himself. But age and inefficiency will make themselves manifest even in government places, and the baron had now retired to enjoy nobility on his estate among the hundred and seventy souls out of whom he had always tried to get the utmost amount of work and obrok, and from whom he received with daily curses the least possible amount of service.

"Ah, this horrid emancipation proposal!" said his sister to me, after she came in and ordered coffee. "It is a most shocking act of injustice on the part of the emperor. His father was a gentleman, and would never have done such a wicked thing. He is a —— Well! We shall all be ruined. My brother paid twenty thousand roubles for this estate and the souls on it, and by what right does the emperor take them from us without sufficient compensation? We are already feeling the bitter effects of it. Not one of these moushicks will work for us if he can help it. Even last summer a great part of our rye crop was suffered to rot on the fields because I could not get

them to cut it down in time. Think of ten souls out of seventy coming to the reaping-field, and these ten cutting only twenty-five sheaves a-day each instead of one hundred, which they can easily cut if they choose!"

Here a servant entered the room carrying coffee-cups, followed by another with bread, and a third with the coffee-pot. Madame looked and cried:

"Where is the cream, you fool?"

"There is no cream, baroness."

"No cream!" screamed madame, "and six cows in the stable!"

Off she ran to make sure. One of the cows had got to the cream and lapped it all up.

"Are you boiling the eggs?"

"Baroness, there are no eggs."

"No eggs, and a houseful of poultry!"

"The nests have been found empty."

"O, Heaven help us! The thieving villains, they will drive me mad! Quick, you fool of a girl, and bring the butter that was made yesterday."

"Baroness, there is no butter. The young baron's dogs and the pigs got into the cellar and ate it all up."

"Liar!" roared the Tartar lady, and cuffed the girl out of the room; the girl screaming as she fled, "It is God's truth!"

"Give such pigs liberty!" said the lady, catching her breath. "We have two-and-twenty servants in this house, and yet you see how we are served. We dare not punish them now as we used to, and they

don't care for my cuffing. Last July the young baron, my nephew, was here on a visit, and for some fault he lashed a peasant with his whip, and cut him over the eye with the handle. What do you think the wretch did? He complained to the"—I did not catch the name, but it was one of the 'icks'—"and there has been no end of trouble ever since about it. Ah! We used to get good work out of the moushicks once. They paid forty—some of the clever ones fifty and sixty—roubles obrok when they were out at work, and those at home were obedient and willing to slave for us five days every week. But now we can neither get obrok from those who are away nor work from those who remain. Heaven knows how it is all to end! but I think the world is turning upside down. The mud is coming to the top. We shall all soon be slaves to our own serfs."

"But, my dear madame," I said, "why do you not adopt Madame Obrassoff's plan? Give them their freedom at once, a few deciatines of land, and time to pay?"

"And who is to work our land?"

"You must work it by hired labourers."

"And where are we to get them, and how pay them?"

"That you must provide for. The surplus of these peasants, if fairly treated, will work for you after a time."

"Not one of them. You are a foreigner, and don't understand these people. They are all revelling in the anticipation of a life of idleness and high

wages. They are already dividing and picking out the best land for their share. As for paying for it, or working for us, nonsense! A moushick is never satisfied. Give him land, and he will ask for pasture. Give him pasture, and he will ask for wood. What he don't get he will steal. No: *our* land must be cultivated by machinery and engines; and where the money is to come from *I* can't tell. Those who can buy engines and wait twenty years for a return of capital may hold on. As for us, we are ruined, and must sell what remains to us for what it will bring, if a customer can be found. That, Mr. Englishman, is the condition to which we are coming, if the barons don't soon put a stop to this emancipation folly."

A deciatine of land measures nearly three acres. This quantity has been for many years selling in Russia from three to ten roubles, according to quality. The serfs do not in law belong to the barons personally, but the land does; and as the serfs were, by imperial edict, long ago made fixtures on the land, so, by a curious fiction, whoever possessed the land possessed the serfs or souls on it. Although not slaves by name, they were really as much slaves as any African negroes are the property of any American planters. Now the emancipation edict severs that connection totally. A serf is no longer a fixture on his master's land. He is no longer a serf, but a free man; he can go where he likes. The land is the baron's, but these now free people must live on it or by it. The edict, therefore, enjoins that

a certain portion of it—five or six deciatines—shall be sold to each male peasant, and for this he must pay the baron fifteen roubles for each deciatine. The general price of land in the market being (as I am informed) not one-half of this sum, the price seems a fair one, involving compensation: so on this head the barons would seem to have little cause to complain. But as the peasants are poor, it is decreed that they are to have nine years to pay in, at a stipulated sum per annum. Or if the baron be willing—and, indeed, whether he be willing or no—the serfs in a village may borrow money from the state, by becoming security for each other, and pledging their land, to pay the baron off at once. Thus they can become immediately and wholly independent, with the state for their only creditor, while the baron obtains the wherewith to farm his own remaining land. But such arrangements not being thought sufficient to meet the present need of the great mass of poor barons, the state has further devoted a large sum to be expended in loans for a long time, at low interest, on the security of the land, to these poor baronial proprietors. Such, with some other arrangements of less moment, are the terms of the famous emancipation edict now at last in force.

CHAPTER XV.

COTTON-MILLS.

EVERY Russian peasant, male and female, wears cotton clothes. The men wear printed shirts and trousers, and the women are dressed from head to foot in printed cotton also. When it is remembered that Russia contains something like thirty-three millions of serfs, besides other classes amounting to twenty millions, all using this article more or less, one can estimate the demand for cotton goods. But a calculation is not to be made from data afforded by free and more prosperous countries. The peasantry are poor, the cotton prints are dear. Hence there is not a tithe of the right amount of consumption. Still the cotton trade in Russia is a large trade, and it is supplied chiefly by native labour in mills—containing machinery made in Oldham and Manchester, and superintended by Englishmen from the same and neighbouring towns.

There may be five or six millions of spindles at work spinning this cotton. Together with the weaving and printing of the same, that forms, indeed, a large item, perhaps the largest, among the manu-

facturing processes of Russia, and employs a capital of thirty millions sterling. The largest mills are in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg, one of these having some hundred and twenty thousand spindles, and a few others are of seventy thousand and sixty thousand; but the great bulk of the trade is in the Moscow district, and scattered about the land in that direction. The number of spindles there may not be so great in any individual mill as in some of the large Petersburg establishments; but the mills are more numerous, some of them nearly as large, and all of them are of respectable dimensions, even according to an English estimate.

The chief causes producing this large manufacturing trade are, of course, the great demand and a high protective tariff, which excludes the cottons of England from the Russian market. England and Englishmen have derived the chief benefit from it notwithstanding. The mills are all filled, as I have said, with English-made machinery; a good deal of English capital is invested in them, and they are almost universally managed by English skilled workmen at high wages.

It is a notorious fact, that although cotton-spinning has been in operation in Russia for upwards of fifty years, and constantly on the increase, the people necessarily becoming practically acquainted with all its details, still they cannot dispense with English superintendence. Wherever native superintendence has been tried it has failed. And it will always be so, notwithstanding the admitted ability of the Russians as

workmen, until a moral and intellectual training as freemen gives them confidence in their own powers, secured to them to induce exertion and competition in skill with their opponents of more favoured lands. But, account for it as we may, it is a disgrace to all concerned that no works requiring the least practical care, and the commonest skill in superintendence, can yet be carried on successfully without the help of highly-paid foreigners. What should we say of ourselves in England if a stranger could point to all the cotton-mills in Lancashire, all the flax-mills of Leeds, Dundee, and Ireland, and all the iron and engineering shops of Glasgow, London, and Liverpool, and say these were all managed and superintended by foreign skill; that the English employed in them were mere labourers and unskilled workmen under the dictation of strangers who could scarcely speak the language of the country? If to this were added the knowledge that the people of England had to pay two or three prices for the cotton goods, because of a high duty and other fiscal restrictions preventing imports at half the price, and that all this only served to make a few rich men richer, while the poor people who wore the cotton had to pay the entire cost of all the foreign cotton wool, foreign machinery, foreign agents, and foreign skill, without themselves deriving any sort of material or moral benefit, England could not long tolerate so great a blunder. This, however, is the state of things in Russia. Several great fortunes have been made by machine-makers and capitalists, and very nice pickings have been obtained by agents

and superintendents, many of whom went to Russia poor and left it rich. But that it has benefited the Russian people, or in any way whatever added to their comfort or improvement, I do not believe. The poor baron has received more obrok from his serfs employed at these places, because they got better wages and paid him accordingly; and this has enabled him to live in ease and frivolity without working his lands. The free people, and the serfs under easy and rich masters, have had more money to drink; they have forgotten their patriarchal simplicity and virtues, if they ever had any, and have learnt all the low vices and drunken habits engendered wherever masses of both sexes of ignorant and debased people mix together—as is the case in mills and factories in Russia —without law, religion, or morality to guide them.

In the interior of the country a considerable number of these "fabrics," as they are called, are the grossest sinks of immorality, tyranny, and wickedness. But there are a few both in Moscow and Petersburg under management, so far as interior arrangements are concerned, that fully equals that of the best-regulated establishments in England. In St. Petersburg particularly, there are the Kolingkin Bridge Works, that might challenge competition with any mill in existence.

The father of Russian cotton and flax-spinning and other manufactures was General Wilson. This gentleman is mentioned by Dr. Clarke in his travels in Russia as a prominent character, and as one who had even then effected great things, and he occupied

an exalted position at the time of the doctor's visit. The writer of these notes knew General Wilson for many years, and enjoyed his hospitality, advice, and friendship on many occasions. A few lines he thinks due to one of the worthiest helpers in good work ever possessed by the Russian Czars, especially since the main facts can be given as they came straight from himself.

General Wilson left Scotland in the ninth year of his age, after having gone through a course of study at the High School of Edinburgh, to which city his parents belonged. He was the son of an ingenious blacksmith, where also his grandfather had lived as the "King's smith," at the old Mint in the Canongate. His parents went to Russia during the reign of the Empress Catherine, who, whatever her faults in other respects, never failed to encourage foreigners of merit who would settle in her dominions. In Russia the young Wilson grew and exhibited talents of no ordinary kind, which soon attracted the notice of General Gascoigne, who had some time before been brought from the Carron Iron-Works to instruct the Russians in the art of casting cannon. Appointed interpreter and secretary to this general, Wilson passed rapidly through various grades and ranks, until he became his assistant in the Imperial Establishment of Engineering at Colpino. When Gascoigne died, he succeeded him in the imperial direction of those immense works, from which a great portion of the armament of the Russian navy has been supplied. He also became, under Marie

Feodorovna (the Emperor Paul's wife), the originator and superintendent of the Foundling Hospital, and of the large flax and cotton manufactory at Alexandroffsky, each the first institution of its kind in Russia. Here, amidst inconceivable difficulties, and in the face of prejudice and opposition before which most men would have quailed, did this persevering Scotchman lay the foundation of that manufacturing enterprise by which Russia is either to gain or lose. He has enjoyed the esteem and respect of the successive sovereigns whom he has served, and from each of whom he has received abundant and tangible proofs of confidence in the highest of those ranks and orders which the law of Russia affords to a foreigner. After having been in the imperial service for nearly eighty years, and in supreme command for sixty-eight, he is now, at the age of ninety, laid on the shelf, and lives in retirement on an ample pension from the present emperor.

Not only did General Wilson originate and carry out the imperial manufactories, which at the outset were designed for models, but he was the mainspring of many private industrial enterprises which have since grown to huge dimensions. He was the first man among four who started the monster Kolingkin Cotton-Works, and is at the present time chairman of their board of directors. Another, and now a large establishment, owes its existence chiefly to the name and influence of General Wilson—namely, that belonging to Messrs. Steiglitz and Craig. The most admirable feature in General

Wilson's whole career has been his incorruptibility in the midst of the notorious dishonesty of Russian functionaries. He has been pointed out as the man who never took and never offered a bribe; and though rich, is not enormously so, as he no doubt might have been had he acted differently. Without wife or children, he has devoted much of his later years to his books, his library being one of the best in Russia. He is now nearly blind, but his appetite for information is still as strong as ever, and he pays a young man of good education to read to him every day.

A friend supplies me with notes of his own experience to the following effect: I was in 18— chief engineer at the large cotton-works at C——, a day's journey from a chief city in Russia. The managing partner on the spot employed two assistants (English), carder and spinner, also a sub-director under himself. The sub-director was a man of some education and considerable general knowledge, and had at one time possessed a mill of his own; but from some cause had been unfortunate, and was now obliged to serve a man in every respect his inferior. The chief man was ignorant, low-bred, tyrannical, and exacting; as bad a specimen nearly as his country could furnish; but he was master over this work, employed from eight hundred to one thousand hands, and being in the interior—irresponsible and unchecked by any kind of popular observation—he gave free play to his unbridled temper and his greed.

The mill went night and day—"sootkie"—the workpeople were hired principally from the steward,

some were paid wages, and found themselves, others were paid nothing, but were fed, the chief paying the steward a stipulated sum per soul per annum—from thirty shillings to not quite five pounds. These people were driven to work in gangs or shifts, by the overseer and his men over hundreds and over tens; and the scenes of cruelty and inhumanity which constantly occurred were exceedingly excruciating to my feelings. My windows faced the mill-yard, and my study-window looked into the whipping-court of the stanavog's house. Few days passed but some of the poor creatures were led there to receive punishment. If the chief was ignorant and low-bred, he was a splendid slave-driver and detective. He was in the habit of bouncing into the mill at all unlikely hours of night or day, and then woe to the skulkers, or any one he imagined to be in a fault; he could swear eloquently in Russ or English, and his English assistants sometimes received a volley of abuse. He durst not carry a "cat"—that is against rule in Russia—the thrashing must be done legally and officially; but he seldom left the works without carrying a list of names: this list, accompanied by a note to his friend the "stan," securing the owners of the names a certain portion of the "stick." I have from my observatory seen married women, pregnant women, girls, boys, and men gray-haired, tied down on a board in that court, their clothes indecently torn up, and the rods applied by a man on each side, for faults of the most trifling character. I have remonstrated with him; but was told, "No stick, no work."

Certainly this man fully believed and acted on that Russian saying.

One day I met the starosta leading four women through the yard.

"Tell me, Evan Evanovitch, what are you going to do with these."

He handed me a paper, and I read—"Give these four (here followed the names) thirty blows each," signed by the director.

This did not surprise me: but it may surprise my readers that a magistrate would, without any trial or investigation—without even knowing the faults for which these people were sent, execute an order of this character.

"Mother," I said to one of the women, "what have you done to deserve this?"

"God knows; the master found me asleep."

"And what have you done?" I said to another.

"I was suckling my little one, and my machine was standing."

"And you?" to a young woman.

"O, he knows very well I am not in fault; but I would not go into his small room last night with him."

"Have you been there before with him?"

"O yes, he takes any of us; he is a pig. I won't go any more, for I am to be married next week."

"And what is your fault?" I said to the fourth, an old withered hag.

"It was nothing. I only took a little yarn,—

only a little to knit with, you know. What's to be done?"

For faults such as these the poor creatures were thrashed, by order of a foreigner, who for a few roubles to the needy stanavog could, without judge or jury, get all the hands in his mill lashed and beaten, to suit his caprice or minister to his amusement, at any time.

It is not creditable to Englishmen that men such as this are to be found among them. But there have been and are found occasionally men who would revive in Russia greater evils ten times than any ever experienced under the old extinct factory system of their own country. Such men are ignorant, to begin with. They possess no fixed principles to go on with; and when they find themselves among a degraded people, and in nearly an irresponsible position of authority, they finish by being heartless tyrants. I have known some of them who could scarcely read or write. One of them, who went to Russia fifteen years ago to be a director of a cotton-mill, had to make his + to documents; another sent the following characteristic order to a friend of mine, which I shall copy verbatim:

"Maecter Broo●,—Ave you any pices of 8 Karter piope, has we wants em to tprisnik to meend testome piopes the Mugiks as you cent av al bin ont spree. frou Monday, cend the piopes and cend the plates has wur ordered bee th' mon as wur cent on tusdy so no more at preasante from your umble cert.

"Gorg. ——'

Such men, although deplorably ignorant in every thing else, generally possess a good practical knowledge of their trade, and a powerful amount of self-assertion. They have been overlookers, spinners, or carders, in some well-regulated work in England, under an educated director, and might have remained decent worthy men in their own sphere, at wages varying from 20*s.* to 30*s.* per week. To such people appointments in Russia as head men, at 4*l.*, 5*l.*, or 6*l.* per week, suggest a Dorado—a great spring from the pipe and glass of ale in a taproom to cigars and brandy in a hotel. From very little men they swell into very great men. Their wives commence at thirty or forty years of age to learn to be "leddies," as one of them told me herself, whom I found one day, shortly after her arrival, buying rings, brooches, gold watch and chain: "Maister says I mun learn to be a leddy noo." And while she is undergoing this expensive change, "Maister" is learning to be a tyrant, and perhaps a drunkard. He kicks about "Jacky," as he styles the Russians, in grand style—speaks of them and to them as to brutes.

But "Jacky" sometimes makes reprisals. He will watch like a cunning wolf on a dark night, and with a brickbat or lump of iron fell his tyrant to the earth by a blow on the back of his head. This is of rare occurrence, but it has happened of late on several occasions.

The same day on which my friend saw the four women going to be beaten he met the sub-superintendent, and mentioned the circumstance.

"Yes," he said, "the master takes the tyrannical way. I cannot prevent it, and do not intend to remain much longer to witness it."

"Do you never order any of them to be beaten?"

"No, never. The stick is not so powerful in Russia as it once was. And even on the score of policy it is better to avoid it, especially for a foreigner. I have studied the Russians a little since I came among them; and though they are sly, slothful, and the greatest of thieves, I do not think they are so far removed from the common feelings of our nature as to be altogether unsusceptible to kind and just dealings. They have little gratitude—in fact, I do not think they yet know what it means. Still I can manage them better, ay and get more work out of them too, by being cool and just and, above all, merciful. But this country is a bad school for an unruly temper."

"Do you never find signs of rebellion or insubordination among them?"

"Not till lately. Since this talk of emancipation, I think I can see a sort of mutual intelligence among them, which must spring from hope, and perhaps secret meetings and talk. Still I do not think them malicious; they seem easily to forget and forgive. Yet," he said, after a pause, "God knows, I should not wish to be the object of their hate; if once their passions broke loose, they would be demons, not men."

Poor man! these were the last words my friend ever heard from him; and that was the last time he saw him in life.

That very night a part of the mill took fire; whether by accident or design no one could or would tell. It was observed in time, and the superintendent, with his two English assistants and a few others, exerted themselves to put it out. The director and the "stan" were carousing in the director's house—a very frequent occurrence; but when the alarm was given both hurried to the scene of the fire.

Now, you know that in Russia the police enjoy the peculiar and exclusive privilege of putting out fires, and they take the lead in all the operations. Perhaps that is the reason why fires here never are put out, but are allowed to burn themselves out; in order to facilitate which process all the doors are unlocked or broken open, all the windows smashed, and the roofs are, if possible, torn off: all this gives a noble draught to the flame. There is no want of bustle, and in the cities generals in uniform hurry about giving all kinds of orders; fellows in gray, with brass helmets, knock against one another, and run their engines into all manner of ridiculous places. There is plenty of daring climbing, and pouring of water; but somehow it all ends, as I have said, in the place burning until there is no more to burn. On the present occasion the subdirector determined on another method, and taking the matter in his own hands, locked the doors of the place on fire—it was the boiler-house—to prevent any draught of wind fanning the rising flames, and threw water on the burning timbers, while the mill-engine was kept going to pump the water. They were succeeding very fast in getting the fire

under, when the police, in the form of the drunken "stan," demanded entrance, and the door was assailed from without.

"On your life, Andrea, don't open the door yet. It will be all out in a few minutes if the door's kept shut."

And the superintendent, after issuing this order to the man stationed at the door, hastened thither himself, to prevent, if possible, what he so much dreaded. But before he could accomplish his purpose, the man, at the sound of the dreaded "stan," had turned the lock, and his highness was pushing himself through the opening door, while the director with a lot of "stan's" officials were pressing on behind. The sub saw there was only one way to save the mill. He heard his men crying, "For heaven's sake keep that door shut! It's blazing up again." He was a powerful man, and could have thrashed ten "stans" into jelly; so he laid hold of the official—words having no effect—hurled him back among his satellites, shut and locked the door, and stood sentry over it himself, until the fire was completely extinguished and the danger past.

The rest is soon told. On opening the door, he was arrested by the "stan," in the name of the law, for laying hands on him in the execution of his duty. The half-drunken director offered no effectual remonstrance. My friend had left the village, and did not return till next day; and so, in a bitterly cold frosty night, this man, who had saved a large mill from becoming a heap of ashes, was dragged, his

clothes saturated with water, to the filthy lock-up, and kept there all night. In the morning he was liberated: in the evening he was attacked by inflammation; then came brain-fever, then death in due time. Few recover here from diseases.

If this narrative should chance to be read by the man who could have saved the brave fellow that night and did not, may the remembrance burn into his heart and mend his future ways! This noble fellow died in a foreign land, and was buried among strangers; his place at home was empty; his wife is a widow, his children are orphans. But the other lives; rich, prosperous, and I suppose happy, enjoying the abundant fruits of a life spent as I have tried to describe amongst the Russians. Such men are, however, the rare exceptions, not the rule, among the English men of business in Russia.

CHAPTER XVI.

ST. PETERSBURG.

At the time of the Crimean war, and since, I have visited the northern Venice—city of useless canals and noble rivers, gorgeous stucco palaces and wooden booths crawling with tarakans and reeking with dirt, of dirty barracks and excellent clean hospitals, of narrow mud lanes and broad ill-paved streets, of many churches and innumerable bells that minister to ceremonial religion. But, as English readers know enough about St. Petersburg, I shall take the whole guide-book for granted.

An Englishman, worthy of the name, is always in a false position in a country like Russia. He cannot grumble, or write to the newspapers; he cannot speak at public meetings, for there are none; he cannot abuse the Government for doing this, or not doing that. He must bear all without hope of remedy until the powers give forth the "ukase." At the same time I am bound to add that a great many former notions about secret police, family spies, sudden disappearances, whipping of fine ladies whose tongues had been too free; about a social atmosphere of dread and suspicion, in which every one doubted his friend,

and feared to breathe a political whisper, have not been confirmed by my fourteen years' experience. I never knew or heard of the sanctity of an Englishman's home being invaded, or (unless in a case I will mention presently) that his political opinions brought him into trouble. I never heard of his letters being opened or examined, unless by a small post-office thief. One letter of mine to a friend in Moscow enclosed a fifty-rouble note. The keen Russian money-scent was too much for my poor envelope. As I stood at the counter of the St. Petersburg post-office, sticking on the double-eagle stamp—price 10 kopecks—I felt that I was doing a foolish thing in sending off an uninsured letter. I looked suspiciously at the seedy official, luxuriating in a salary of twenty roubles a-month, who had sold me the stamp, and I am sure my tell-tale face informed him that I was surreptitiously passing a money-letter through his hands. When my friend wrote that he received the empty note, I drove to the post-master general, attacked his assistant, whom I found coolly cutting his nails, with the wrath of an injured man; and was told by him, as he carefully nipped off the corner of the nail of the little finger of the left hand, that it served me right for attempting to defraud the government of the insurance, and that I was liable to prosecution.

On the other hand, I once sent a sum of money to a person in the interior, but this time I insured it, and got a receipt. When it reached its destination the man had removed; in trying to find him, the packet travelled to all the Evanoffskys in Russia, to

Siberia, to Odessa, to Kief, to Karkoff, crossed the Ural mountains into Asia, and back through all the offs and skys in every government of the empire. After having made the tour of the Russian dominions it was returned to St. Petersburg at the end of fifteen months. But as my friend to whom it was addressed was by that time toasting his toes at an English grate, I presented my receipt, and received the letter with the money enclosed just as I had put it in. The large envelope was covered, back and front, with the seal of every government-town through which it had passed. From this I could calculate pretty nearly that my letter had travelled thirty thousand miles for fourpence. It may not be generally known in England that the Russians had a cheap uniform postage before us—five kopecks, or two pence, for town letters and letters in one government or county; and ten kopecks, or four pence, for any letter all over the empire: and if the quality as well as length of roads are taken into account, and that all the mails are carried on springless carts by horses, and sometimes dogs, deer, and other quadrupeds, when vehicles are impracticable, the cost will appear even less than our celebrated penny-post in England.

I can say too for the Russian post-office officials that in civility, activity, and business habits they offer a very striking contrast to the officials of any other department of the government.

Foreign newspapers are obtained through the post-office only, by paying a year's advance. A list of those papers which are "permitted" is circulated

early in November; and those favoured to appear on the list are there not because of the nature of their politics, but simply because such papers are in demand by the foreign residents; and should you require some one not on the list, a requisition to the proper department will bring it at once. But no single newspaper from abroad is allowed to reach its destination, or, if it do, it is charged so enormously that your friend's kindness in sending you a 'copy,' which cost him a penny in England, will mulct you of six shillings. Up to January 1863, the cost of papers was ridiculously high. The *Times* cost fourteen pounds delivered, the *Evening Mail* about seven pounds per annum; the rest in proportion: but at the time mentioned a reduction was made of about fifteen per cent.

Of course every one knows that the government takes a parental care and displays a tender solicitude as to the ideas set before its children. Those remorseless scissors of the censor, which used during the Crimean war to cut the newspapers into waving strips of paper-bunting, are now laid aside for the "blacking brush;" and even this is in a great measure a thing of fits and starts. During the Polish insurrection, several long articles in the *Times*, and even an entire debate in Parliament, were remorselessly stamped out.

The stringency of the censorship over native journals is much relaxed. "Men of the pen and mighty thought" are now breathing more freely; and many new journals have started and are starting into life.

The censorship is now wholly abolished as regards newspapers and books above the size of pamphlets of a few pages, and the French system of warning is adopted. This is not a free press, but a great advance on the old plan of censorship.

Subjects, the bare mention of which would have entitled a Russian to police surveillance, or a worse fate, a few years ago, are now more freely discussed. Parliamentary representation, that bugbear and terror of all despots, is becoming a subject of open consideration. In fact, if the present liberal-minded Emperor be not scared from his intentions and designs by ignorant, impatient, and designing marplots, great changes and reforms are looked for.

The Athenians were prohibited, on pain of death, from making any more gods, because the state found there were more gods in Athens than people. If Petersburg has been likened to Venice for its canals and rivers, it may also be very justly compared to Athens for its gods and images, and outward glare of superstitious worship. Not content with having noble churches in every street, filled with images and saints, and open all the night and day, these holy Russian people are so very pious that they must erect small Gothic-looking huts, filled with images, and gods, and holy water, and oil; and the sacred offering-box at the corners of streets, and, if the street be long, in a niche of some centre wall, and on the ends and centres of bridges, in the squares, at the entrances and in the centres of the market-places; so that no time for worship may be lost, no opportunity missed,

whether the people be engaged in amusement, business, or pleasure.

Nothing strikes a stranger more than this never-ceasing devotion and crossing. Get into an omnibus at the end of the Nevsky Prospect, the main street of the capital, and you are startled every few minutes by your companions doffing hats or caps, piously crossing themselves, and sometimes muttering a prayer; look out of the window at these moments, and you will perceive that you are passing a church, or one of the image-huts. I have seen men lying drunk in a cart, sprawl to their knees on passing one of these places, go reverently through the operation, and then fall back amongst the straw content. "Oberesis," or images, are placed over the doors of every house, and one in the corner of every room; having invariably a burning lamp suspended before it, whether night or day. Even foreigners, let them be the most violent opponents of image- or picture-worship possible, must have a joss hung up in their kitchens at least, otherwise no servant would remain in the house an hour. He who has a workshop, or "magazine," must have a handsome one conspicuous in or facing the entrance, that prayers may be said going in and coming out; and so small an influence have these devotional exercises on the morals of the people, that the very oil used to illuminate their sacred images or pictures is not safe in their hands. I knew at one time an old superintendent of a manufactory, noted for his extra piety, who charged each man under him, to the number of

five hundred, ten kopecks per month (one kopeck being sufficient) for oil to burn before the workshop idol. His real salary was twenty roubles per month; but he thus managed to save forty-five roubles, or about 6*l.* 10*s.* a month, by robbing the saint and his votaries. Perhaps he had as good a right to a profit of nearly nine hundred per cent on his oil, as the priests have to a like profit on their candles.

There is a market-place in St. Petersburg called the Apraxin Dvor, which during the incendiary fires of 1862 was burned down, but is rebuilt on the same spot much as before. Foreigners have very appropriately named it the "Loose Market;" for loose it is,—with loose characters, loose goods, and loose morality. It may cover fifteen acres of ground, and is in the very centre of the city. The shops, stalls, and booths contain every known and every unknown article under the sun, secondhand. The merchants here are all pure Russians, from the old woman with a few rabbit-skins, to the merchant with a large stock of furs: but they are all a set of the most arrant chafferers and traffickers in stolen goods. The old glory of Field Lane in London, where one might lose his handkerchief or watch at one end, and find it ticketed for sale by the time he got to the other, is the glory of this Loose Market every day. Here come the household servants to sell their plunder; and here also come their masters and mistresses to buy it back, if possible. I have bought books with my own name, or with the name of a well-known English ambassador, legibly inscribed on them, for

a tenth of their value. Here are old clo', old iron, old steam-engines, old power-looms, old pictures, old epaulets, old orders, stars, and ribbons; endless old curiosity shops; old birds of every plumage, and young bears, dogs, cats, rabbits, poultry, sledges, carriages, furniture, kitchen utensils, cutlery, Tartar and Circassian caps, belts, swords, pistols, every musical instrument produced since Pan made his own pipe, and tens of thousands of unmentionable articles heaped in glorious confusion in the stalls and booths of the bearded rascals, who drive a roaring trade in buying from and selling to the poor what has been filched from the rich. Yet in this place, the very sanctum of robbery, you will find the joss placed in every conspicuous corner of the lines and alleys of the shops; and before the josses prayer and worship is going on from morning till night with greater unction and fervency than in any fashionable church in the city.

One of our great sea-captains gave forth the signal on the memorable morning of Trafalgar, "England expects that every man this day will do his duty." Another sea-captain of later times, to whom also his country is justly indebted, gave out in the Baltic the word, "Sharpen your cutlasses, and the day is your own." So I daresay it would have been; but the day never came. The Russian fleet knew better than to try the edge of those sharp cutlasses. It took refuge from the fire-eating admiral and his sharp weapons behind the fortifications at Cronstadt, and allowed him to cruise in their waters undisturbed.

I was one of four thousand loyal Englishmen who were cooped up in St. Petersburg during Sir Charles Napier's sojourn in the Baltic and the Gulf of Finland; and it may be imagined with what feelings we found ourselves in the midst of a people whose capital our fleet was blockading, and whose monster stronghold in the Black Sea our soldiers were reducing to ashes. When we were told that "fighting Charlie" had declared he would breakfast at Cronstadt, lunch at Peterhof, and dine at a fashionable hour in the capital, after his day's work, there were many of us who really believed that Sir Charles would dine some fine day in Petersburg after taking Cronstadt, and there were even certain preliminary arrangements made for a great banquet to be given to the conqueror. The distance to Cronstadt is only eighteen miles, and we listened every day, every hour for the roar of the battle. The Russians, who were as confident as we were that Sir Charles meant fighting, found their materials of war in a deplorable state; their powder was said to be mixed with earth in the proportion of three to one, the difference having gone into the pockets of the purveyor and the receiver of stores. Disorganisation and dread were therefore the order of the day for a short anxious period. Immense trains of civilians, with their effects, passed through Petersburg from Cronstadt to the interior. None but fighting-men remained in the doomed stronghold, and many of these were quaking in their boots.

It was and is still the opinion of all intelligent

Englishmen who were in Petersburg then, that had our fleet made the attack at this moment, it would assuredly have taken Cronstadt. In which case, by this time the burning of Petersburg by the hands of the Russians themselves would have been a matter of as great historical interest as the burning of Moscow.

The English then in St. Petersburg were in great excitement; and although peaceable foreigners of all kinds had been by a special ukase guaranteed the Emperor's protection, still for a time considerable doubt existed. Public meetings were out of the question; but many private gatherings took place under the name of social family parties, birthday-feasts, and the like. I had heard of these, and managed to get myself entered for the next. It soon came. A great birthday was to come off in a certain well-frequented English lodging-house and private hotel in the Galerney Street.

That street, though narrow and gloomy when compared with other of the city thoroughfares, is one of the best known in St. Petersburg; particularly known to foreigners. The house appointed for the gathering was as well known as the street, although used principally by the humbler classes of English residents and visitors. The street contains many lodgings and counting-houses of foreign merchants. One end, flanked by the Senate-house, faces St. Isaac's plain and the Admiralty buildings, where rides Peter the Great on his war-horse. The other end is flanked by the building-yard of the New

Admiralty. In the centre is the palace of the Grand Duke Nicholas, brother to the Emperor; and branching off right and left are banking establishments and palaces of Mentchikoff, Bobrinsky, and others. Here stood the English lodging-house, for ninety years the home of a certain class of Englishmen and of Americans. It stood, and probably yet stands, in a court, and has the least possible claim to elegance. Crossing the dirty court, under a low wooden porch, and over an old horseshoe nailed to the threshold, we passed through a narrow passage, and at once entered the large dining-room of the establishment.

There was a long table, and round it, on paralytic chairs, sat some thirty or forty Englishmen smoking and drinking. Seeking a more retired spot, we passed through to a room adjoining; but here the noise was worse; and as the tobacco-smoke rolled by in clouds we could discern on the walls Bendigo, Tom Spring, the Flying Dutchman, and Voltigeur, in company with the Queen, Prince Albert, and Lord Palmerston. They looked down upon a company of eager men, smoking cigars, spinning cotton (verbally), making machines of all kinds, weaving calico, building ships, bridges, and engines. During the short time we could endure the smoke, the words that most assailed the ear were such as "valves, eccentrics, parallel motions, vacuum;" and, as ten arguments were going on at once, the cry was of "turbine, water-wheel, self-actors, gearing, power-loom, sewing-machines, shuttles, spindles, wheels, shafts, pulleys."

My friend whispered to me that more machines had been made, more engines built, more calico woven, out of tobacco-smoke, in that small room during the last thirty years, than in all Russia and England together.

Cards were in use at two tables, the players being grooms and horse-boys—managers of the studs of Russian counts and princes; for, even in respect of horse-flesh, English skill is paid for in Russia at high salaries. Among this company was also a Yankee, proprietor of a living hairy woman, Julia Pastrana, whom he was exhibiting in Petersburg. Since the time of which I write, Julia, poor hideous creature, has departed this life, so has her child. Their master got them embalmed in Moscow, but the doctors kept them as curiosities. Afterwards the Yankee claimed and received the bodies, on the ground that he was father of the one and husband of the other; and, after exhibiting them in this state in various parts of the world, he ultimately disposed of them for a consideration to some one in London. Following the Yankee, there were two clowns from the circus, some half-dozen nigger singers and dancers from the Mineral Waters, and a couple of chorus-singers from the Italian Opera. In a corner sat a few commercial gents, clerks and salesmen from the English magazine, and mechanics from Baird's. There were captains of ships, boiler-makers, paper-makers, shipbuilders, master-tailors, farriers, coal-agents,—all of them English, Scotch, Irish, and American.

Retreating from this din, we sought a quieter

life somewhere else; and popping our heads into a side room, off the right of the entrance-passage, found the other half of this odd corner of life. This was the "ladies" room: not a male monster amongst them. "Let us go," I said; "this won't do."

"Stop," said my companion, "do not judge too hastily; remember this is the only place in Petersburg where such a crowd of English can assemble, all sorts being welcome; and depend on it, you will find as sterling loyalty, good sense, and worth here as in many a place of more outward refinement. Let us sit down here among the engineers at the dining-table."

Here the noise was less, and the conversation rather interesting. "These men," said my Mentor, "are out of place. They have thrown up excellent situations and high salaries, rather than help the Russians against their own country. They have been employed in the building of steam-ships, frigates, engines, gun-boats, batteries, and docks for the Russian government. Almost to a man, as soon as war was declared, they demanded their passports, and they are now making arrangements to take the rather dangerous journey overland to England.

"That old veteran with the iron-gray hair and the massive forehead is from the celebrated Penns of London; he is a Scotchman, and is called Old Wallace. Young Wallace sits next him; you see he is a stout thick-set fellow, with arms and shoulders like his namesake. He is a highly-skilled engineer from Napier's on the Clyde; and was engaged only a few

weeks before the war on a Russian first-rate, fitting up two 600-horse-power engines. A few weeks more of his skill would have sufficed to send this ship out, an active enemy to England; but these few weeks he would not give.

"'No, no,' said Wallace, 'I winna stop a minute; money won't keep me, and war breaks a' contracts. I'll be wanted at Clyde noo, I'm thinking; and the sooner I'm hame, the better.'

"Beside him sits little Hargreaves, late engineer of the emperor's yacht; and Merriton, who has left a situation worth 500*l.* a year with the American Company, rather than assist that company in building and fitting out ten new gun-boats. Then there are Donaldson and Young, Thomson and Wilson, engineers of boats belonging to the Baltic fleet. And there are the managers of the various departments in the large engineering establishment of Baird's, in which also Russian engines and boats are to be made and built.

"About half-a-dozen who had been navigating the Baltic, and had gained a certain knowledge of these waters and of Cronstadt are to be sent into the interior as prisoners of war. They know too much to be allowed to go. Just now they are under police surveillance, but only to see that they do not leave the city."

The feeling of nationality was intense amongst these workmen; and there was sound sense and judgment in their talking. The long delay of Sir Charles Napier in taking Cronstadt seemed to fill

them with disgust. It could be done; the way was freely discussed, and to my mind evidently practicable.

In the midst of all this conversation two persons glided into the room, seated themselves a little apart, and called for "bottel vine."

"They are pretty well got up for Englishmen," said one of the engineers, "but their hats don't fit."

"Rats!" cried a voice, clear and distinct, above the Babel of sounds around; and immediately the weather became the one topic of conversation. Presently the landlord—a tall jolly-looking fellow, with black curly hair, broad good-humoured countenance, white vest and cravat, gold studs in clean linen, wine-coloured frock, and the genuine air of a butler—went to the strangers, while a circle of guests gathered round.

"What do you want here?" said Tom the landlord.

"O, noting; come spend money, make fun, drink glass grog; that all. Good Englishmen."

"No," said Tom. "You are Russians; you have mistaken the house. This is a party of my private friends, and you have no invitation. Get out directly! Away with you! My house admits none but clean English."

This was all I heard. The strangers seemed to resist being turned out. There was a great noise of voices, then a struggle for a moment, and then I saw the two spies lifted in the arms of several strong fellows, and unceremoniously flung out into the yard.

After this, the business of the evening proceeded as if nothing had happened. Supper came, and a great feast it was. Tom's wife took the head of the table, tucked up her sleeves to the shoulders, and began to carve in magnificent style. She was a tall, stout, good-looking woman of a certain age, with an eye like a hawk's, and a great power of tongue and arm. Tom, in subjection to his helpmate, took the foot of the table; and, as in many other things, modestly followed the lead of the superior spirit. As for Tom himself, he came to Russia many years ago in the suite of Lord Bloomfield, when that nobleman was ambassador to the Court of Nicholas; finding diplomacy slow work, Tom sought distinction and profit, as many others have done, in marriage. The widowed mistress of the Galerney English lodging-house was willing; so Tom entered on immediate and permanent possession of a buxom wife and paying business. I am told Tom has a tender heart. His house is open to all the unfortunate English aspirants after fortune, who have fallen down the ladder; such he will keep for years.

"If they get situations, they will pay me; if not, it cannot be helped; they cannot be houseless in a strange land and starve."

So he talks and so he acts. He will gallop through town and country amongst English residents to collect money for a needy widow, whose husband has left her destitute with half-a-dozen little ones, and then ship her off to her friends in England with five or six hundred roubles in her pocket. This happens oftener

than might be expected, considering the high wages that artisans and skilled workmen get. Be this as it may, Tom's house is not only a refuge for those who have fallen, but the starting-point for many of those who would climb. Both men and women go to Russia on speculation, with high hopes and empty purses. Tom gives such people board and lodging, and help till work is found.

But supper is over; the plum-pudding has disappeared in the blue flame of brandy; confusion is transformed to order by the election of a chairman. He opens with a speech upon the nature of the war, and ends with the speedy reduction of Cronstadt by the English fleet under "old Charlie." A song follows; it has been made for the occasion by the singer, is very well received, and so apt to the excited feelings of the company, that at its close all rise and give three tremendous cheers. Here is a verse of it:

"There's a fleet that dares not leave her ports,
Nor sail in any sea;
But, crouching close behind her forts,
She skulks, and shuns the free.
The coward slaves, who tread the deck,
No flag have e'er unfurled;
They know 'twould sink in smoke and wreck—
A lesson to the world."

Chorus, something about a "dastard flag, deny it who can," and ending with "man to man."

It touched the right spot in each patriotic heart, and judging by the feeling it excited, there existed nowhere on earth truer and more loyal subjects of

Queen Victoria than were assembled here on this occasion. Champagne (at fifteen shillings per bottle) sparkled, glasses jingled, toasts, speeches, songs followed one another: "The Queen, God bless her!" "Lord Pam," "The vigorous prosecution of the War," "Old England," "Home," and many others; and the meeting separated not long before dawn. It was two A.M. when I reached the third line Vasilli Ostroff, my temporary domicile.

Mr. Beadly (let me call him) of the evening party was in bed at eight o'clock A.M. when his wife rushed in, with a terrified look, and roused him from sleep: "O William! what can you have been about last night? Here are the police inquiring for you; I told them you were unwell, and could not be seen." Mr. B. gave his benediction to the police, and asked who had come.

"It is Evan Petrovitch, the head of the — Chast, and his man; they are in the next room."

"Ah! quite so," said Mr. Beadly. "I see I must be quick, or somebody will get into trouble."

Now it must be mentioned that this gentleman had been in Russia long enough to know both men and things indifferently well, and had had dealings, always beneficial to his countrymen, with the police on more than one occasion. He gave two or three terrible groans, sure to be heard in the next room, and while hastily pulling on his clothes continued the groans at intervals. In a minute or two he was ready. "Now," he said, "Mary, go to these police gentlemen, place brandy and wine, cheese and bread

before them. Tell them I am bad with toothache, engaged with my dentist; and they will oblige me by waiting a little. On no account allow them to come in here." As he said the last words, he opened the door leading to the back lane, rushed through a passage down stairs, mounted a droshky, and drove off to the — Chast, where he popped fifty kopecks into the hand of the janissary at the door, and was in a trice ushered into the presence of the magistrate of the district in which the meeting had taken place.

This gentleman was a quiet, easy, good-natured man. He had not opened out for the day, but was leisurely sipping his coffee and smoking a "papeross" in his own sanctum—no doubt calculating the number of "takes" he was likely to get that day, and dreaming of a nice little emeanie (estate), valued at 300 *souls*, that he would be able to buy if he could only hold this particular "chast" another year or so. But the worthy man had an enemy, an active one, who had been plotting to deprive him of it. This was no other than Evan Petrovitch, at that moment drinking wine and eating cheese in Mr. Beadly's house. Now, on a clear calculation of illicit fees, the one "chast" was worth 3000 per cent more than the other; hence the struggle of the one to retain, and the other to obtain it.

"Good morning, Nicholi Ephraimovitch; I hope you are well."

"Thank God, I am well; are you also enjoying health, Gospodine Beadly? Pray what brings you

here so early? No trouble, I hope. Take a papeross and tell me."

"Yes, trouble; but to yourself. Last evening, while you were drunk at the Traktere, there was held a great meeting in Tom B.'s under your very nose. I will give you the particulars. Take your pen. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Well," continued Beadly. "Birthday-party on a large scale; supper, champagne, toasts, speeches, Queen's health, Emperor's health" (this Beadly says is the only thing on his conscience), "talk about the war, the fleet, Cronstadt, all bombast, songs, birthday gift; all harmless and quiet; left at two o'clock. That is your report. Now listen: Evan Petrovitch, your *friend*, is even at this moment waiting in my antechamber until I get several teeth extracted—bad toothache, you see. He wants some information; and he wants your place. While you were at the Traktere playing billiards, he was at the party, capitally got up. I thought at one time that I knew the fellow; but afterwards could not find him. Now I am sure it was he; and as he knows me, he imagines I may give him a hint to help his report. You must get your report in before him; do you see?"

The "stan" had been writing very fast while Mr. B. was speaking, and finishing the paper, he rang a hand-bell, which brought an official.

"Order my droshky out. It must be ready in five minutes. Begone! Ah, I see, Mr. B.; just give

me a few of the names of the guests; any of them will do. Good morning, Mr. B. As your teeth are now pulled out and your toothache is better, go back to Evan Petrovitch, and oblige me still more by keeping him engaged just one quarter of an hour; that will be plenty of time. I am quite satisfied that your meeting was all quite regular and proper. Evan won't get my chast this time, the pig!"

Off sped B. to give audience to Evan Petrovitch, and off drove Nicholi to General P., the head of the secret police, with his report.

The general, after reading the report, merely said, "Very good; I am not afraid that the English will hatch any treason. They can meet and have their grog and beefsteak, and make speeches, as much as they like among themselves. You are quite right, however, to be diligent. But there is one thing which must be attended to—" At this moment an attendant announced Evan Petrovitch. "Admit him," said the general. The moment he entered, and found Nicholi there, he saw he was foiled. Nevertheless he presented his report. His Excellency read: "A treasonable and dangerous meeting among English last night in the Galerney lodging-house, No. 31;" and then he read the whole report *sotto voce*, and said: "But that is not your chast, is it, sir?"

"No, your Excellency; but, as I told your Excellency before, that chast is not properly looked after. If I may—"

"No, you may not. I think differently. It appears to me that it is particularly well looked after.

There are two reports about a very simple affair, and I find them substantially the same. You, sir, had better mind your own district; but allow me to tell you both, as I was about to say when you, Evan Petrovitch, were announced, that I have had a fuller and more perfect account before any of yours came; and the only objectionable incident is one that neither of you notice. A scurrilous song was sung, reflecting, in bitter terms, upon our country, the Czar, and the Russian fleet. The singer of the song is the author of it; and had he done nothing but sing it, I should not have cared to trouble him; but he gave copies. He is known; but those who received copies my informant does not know yet. Now mark me; I want a copy of that song. When you get it, apprehend the author. That is his address."

This took place about nine o'clock. Early the same morning the author of the song was roused from his sleep by a message from the head of police summoning him to appear immediately. On obeying this summons, he found, to his astonishment, that he had been invited to a talk about very ordinary affairs. At parting, however, the general, in a casual manner, said, "O, by the bye, Mr. —, you make verses sometimes, do you not? A poet, I believe." This, said with a peculiar twinkle of intelligence in the eye of the querist, opened the eyes of our poet. He had a sudden vision of a prison and Siberia; but, controlling himself with difficulty, and laying hold of the back of a chair to support his shaking knees, he said:

"Your Excellency, I am no poet. I may have made a few verses; but Russia is a bad place for the muse."

"Ah, I see. That will do. I am glad you are not a poet. I don't care, you know; but others might. Suppose any one I knew or respected had really made some rather strong lines on the present war: suppose he had sung them; last night, for instance; and even given away a few copies of them; I would tell him he was a great fool, and that he was playing with edge-tools—an egregious fool, certainly, in these times. But then, you know, fools are sometimes necessary to their families, and so on; and as these families might be inconvenienced by an extended absence of their head, I would advise such a fool to lose no time, not a minute, in getting back these copies and burning them to tinder. I know nothing of such a foolish person, of course. I hope there are none such under my orders. But if you know of any, just hint as much from me. Tell him what I have said. Good morning."

The poor fellow could not speak; but giving the kind-hearted general a look of heartfelt gratitude, he sprang down stairs, ran home, and burnt every scrap of tell-tale paper; then muffling himself up in a large cloak, he got out horses and drove to the homes of those to whom he had given copies of his song. In two hours all was safe. During the day his house was searched, and his papers were examined; so were the houses of those who had received copies; in fact, he assisted in one search himself. But, of

course no paper of any consequence was found; and so the matter dropped.

By what means the general got his information I cannot tell; but it was whispered to me that there were such things as renegade Englishmen found sometimes among the Russian secret police.

CHAPTER XVII.

OFFICIAL AND COMMERCIAL.

PROFITABLY to understand trading in Russia, the import duties and the excise laws, the restrictions, privileges, grants, and concessions, the guild corporation and town dues, the police regulations and custom-house requirements, where one can trade and where not, what one can trade in and what not, to what extent, under what guild one can export and import, take contracts, commence a manufactory, or open a shop, to discover the duties and prices of the subordinate *icks* and so forth, would require, as was said by a celebrated English commercial reformer who visited Russia some years ago, a course of many years' training at a university teaching the principles and practice of chicanery, bribery, smuggling, and lying.

English merchants have had no cause to complain of their "returns" in Russia. They have held, and hold now, a great share of many of the main branches of Russian export and import; they have the flax, hemp, grain, tallow, hides, and bristles, together with the chief importations of machinery, and other things.

The centre about which their organisation revolves

is the Factory, while the circumference touches the farthest points in the interior of Russia's vast empire on the one side, and on the other the strong rooms and iron safes of the great London banks, and of the merchant princes of England. Admission to the circles of the Factory, to the small exclusive coteries of first-guild English merchants, is charily given. It is not difficult to find society amongst the free and polite circles of the Russian nobility; but an introduction from Earl Russell to the embassy, with documentary evidence as to "weight" from Threadneedle and Lombard Streets, are the only certain passports to the society of leading English merchants. In other respects they are all honourable men, kind and generous, liberal to the poor, and in all cases good and loyal subjects of our Queen. There are merchants in this circle who are, in the truest sense of the word, English gentlemen, and bring the nicest sense of honour to their dealings under a corrupt commercial system.

But my purpose now is to speak of its influence on the character of the mass of traders. I cannot show this better than by repeating the substance of a conversation I had with a rich trader who lives on the Island that is the quarter in Petersburg where "merchants most do congregate." He soon told me that his motto was, to do in Rome as the Romans do. "Fight them with their own weapons, sir; that is the plan. Drive a mine under theirs and blow them up; but do it safely, legally, you know. Difficulties? Yes, I believe you. But money overcomes all difficulties

in Russia. The great thing is to meet the Russians on their own ground, and just do as they do.

"Take a government concession. Well, sir, some fellow with a scheming head and not a kopeck in his pocket discovers that Petersburg or Moscow is dark, so he will offer gas; or dry, so he will offer water. Of course you know as well as I do that his mind is set neither on gas nor water. He wants roubles. He is great as a draughtsman; or, if not, he employs somebody who is. A fine array of plans and drawings on a large scale, beautifully coloured, is got up. I have observed the Russians, in their present state of national childhood, to be very fond of pictures. The projector then talks of a concession or privilege for ninety years. He does not know how to get it. He comes to me. I make a bargain, and direct him where to go. General Butteraloaffski and his Excellency Count Takethecreamoffski, for thirty, forty, or fifty thousand roubles, undertake to get the concession. The battle is won, and victory sits smiling on the projector's brazen—what is it? The great men with the long names having obtained the privilege, the company is formed and shares are issued. The thing is to pay fifty per cent. The office is opened and besieged with buyers. Shares go up. The company's grant or concession usually extends to the unlimited importation, duty free, of all materials necessary for the works. Enormous quantities beyond what is required are imported, and sold at a large profit; which, together with ten or fifteen per cent from the makers and builders of the works, nearly all goes into the

projector's pocket. He also gets a large sum from the company for management, and from fifteen to twenty thousand roubles for the original plans, long before the works are ready. Of course, also, long before they have been practically tested he is a rich man, and retires to 'Vaterland,' leaving the whole affair in irretrievable confusion. His plans are at last found to be mere fancy pictures, and the works erected in accordance with them—as in the case of the Petersburg Water Company—become a monument of the projector's incapacity and the stupidity of shareholders. The shares go down, and great is the rage of the said holders. But what cares the fortunate projector? He has caught his hare.

"Contracts are different things, and rather curiously managed. 'Torgs,' as they are called here, or auctions, as you English would call them, take place in a government office. The contract is offered at an upset price, and knocked down to the lowest bidder. Some time ago I travelled from Moscow to Petersburg with twenty tailors. I had gone to Moscow on purpose to do this. The twenty men were going to attend a torg for 100,000 suits of sailors' and soldiers' clothes. I wanted the contract, and had bought up all the competing tailors in Petersburg; but the Muscovites I knew must also be purchased. Eighteen of the twenty had no other intention than to be bought. They lived by torgs, and were easily managed. But the other two 'meant it;' and with them I had some tough bargaining, and much striking of hands, before I persuaded one of them not to bid for the contract.

The other, an old, wily, oily, long-bearded, hook-nosed schneider, was incorrigible. He was determined to go in and win. I was not less determined. The fact is, sir, I had already sold the contract, and must get it. What was to be done? We were approaching Bullagonie, a station, as you know, where the up and down trains meet. I took my course; paid my men, the tailors, an extra sum, and the guards of the two trains got something. The result was, that they managed to get my obstinate friend into the Moscow train, and before he found out the trick he was far on the way back to his own home. On the same day at eleven o'clock I got the contract, and the schneider lost his bribe. A man should not be stubborn, you see, but do as others do."

"How much did you make by this torg?" I asked.

"O, that is my own affair. But I can tell you that those tailors got more than would keep them all comfortably for a year or two. As I said before, they live on torgs. I know a countryman of yours who makes a very good thing also of the government torgs, and it was I who put him up to it. He came to me, and wanted my help to negotiate a government contract. We drove to the proper bureau to examine the plans and specification. By calculation done on the spot, your countryman found that the work could be done for forty thousand roubles, and at that sum leave a profit. But the contract was too large for him, so he said he should think no more of it. Now that did not suit me, and I soon convinced him that

it would not suit him either. He therefore put in as a competitor for the work. Six other contractors had come to the same conclusion, that the work could be done for forty thousand, though the government offer was an upset price of one hundred thousand, the lowest bidder under that sum getting the contract. The seven met. One of them bought out the other six; and when the torg took place it was knocked down to him for ninety-six thousand roubles; the difference between this sum and forty thousand being sheer surplus. Your countryman received his share from it for backing out; I got my little commission; and the government paid exactly fifty-six thousand roubles too much for its whistle."

"But," I asked, "how came the government to put so ridiculously high a price upon the work?"

"Your simplicity is great. Do you not know that the government appoints an architect to make the plans, and fix the price. Now there is a rule quietly kept in such matters, that the successful competitor shall pay the architect ten per cent on the gross amount of the contract. Do you not see that it is his interest to make the price given as high as possible? Had it been brought down to its real value in this case, four thousand roubles is all he would have taken; whereas he got nine thousand six hundred. Do you see now why the government upset price is ridiculously high?

"Sir, I am speaking of things that are no secret; but these are nothing to the doings at the custom-house. It is astonishing how many fellows make

large and small fortunes there on little pay; so very little indeed, that it would not keep them in cigars, but for the nice way they have of managing.

"Smuggling is an ugly word; and they are only low creatures, who do not know better, who will venture to run cargoes or smuggle by land. No doubt this is done to a great extent, considering the enormous frontiers of Russia, and her suicidal tariff; but it is always dangerous, besides being demoralising. I should advise no man to try it, when he can manage the whole thing by commission safely and legally through the custom-house itself in a business-like manner. I had at one time some experience in 'running' and smuggling; but I have dropt this vulgar practice long ago, and now follow the proper way of trade—that is, bring every thing through the custom-house in a regular form. And, sir, it pays better; that is the main point."

"But, my dear sir," I said, "how can you smuggle through the custom-house? It seems incredible."

"I do not smuggle. I pay a commission, and the thing is done. Just look at this pianoforte—a first-rate 'grand' from Broadwood. Had that instrument come through the 'Tamoshny' as a 'forte-piano,' it would have cost me one hundred roubles, that is fifteen pounds of your money. But, sir, I shipped it as a thrashing-machine—my children have certainly made it one—and it cost me no duty at all; machinery, you know, is the only thing duty free. I paid my expeditor his little commission, and he managed to convince the examining official, by what

means I do not stop to inquire, that a thrashing-machine it was, and as such it passed. Now do you comprehend?"

"Not quite. What is an expeditor?"

"Well, an expeditor is a man appointed to help foreign traders. He is supposed to prevent needless delays, and overcharges of duties, and to make the declarations and entries in the custom-house books. The merchant is supposed to look to him for justice and fair play, against the extortion of officials. He ought to represent the merchant and importer, and to see that he is not cheated in any way. That is the theory of his office; and if you make it worth his while no doubt he will act up to it all, and do a great deal more for you. He can get the officials to pass any thing under any name you choose, only, you know, the commission varies with the case. His own interest is of course the principle on which the expeditor acts, and not the interest of his employer. Those who pay him well enough get all they want; those who stand up for plain dealing and justice get what they don't like. I know the case of a simpleton who was beginning business in Petersburg, and imported a rather large quantity of plain white glass ware. This article figures in the tariff list at two roubles and twenty-five kopecks per pood. He meant simply to pay the proper duty in a straightforward way. He was ignorant, and had to be taught. A competent commission was not offered to the expeditor. Well, by some singular optical delusion the examining officials, under the inspection and in the presence of

his expeditor, found that all this man's white glass was coloured and gilded. The duty was thus raised to ten roubles per pood. But that was not all. Because the glass was called 'white' glass in the declaration, when the expeditor and his accomplices had transformed it into coloured and gilt, he was fined fifty per cent for a false declaration. This added another five roubles to the ten already put on; and the end of the matter was that the importer had to pay forty-five shillings per pood, instead of seven shillings, and his clear loss from the transaction was about one hundred pounds. Protest or redress was, and always is, out of the question; the expeditor and the officials being leagued to maintain their own decisions. This and some other transactions with the custom-house of a like nature, in which the same man stood out for payment of just dues and no corruption, ruined him. Still you will perceive that it was all his own fault. He had nobody to blame but himself; he set himself against the customs of the custom-house, and lost the game. No, sir, it will not do to live in Rome and not do as the Romans do. I don't say that all the expeditors are of this stamp. Some of those who are employed exclusively by the large firms are far above such things, and of unblemished character; but the system gives ground for a general complaint among the ignorant tradesmen and smaller merchants of Russia that the custom-house is to them a place of robbery. To us who know the value of an opening for profit, and who have been educated by experience, it has a very

different aspect. We are quite satisfied, and want no change."

Without vouching for every word told me by my commercial friend, I may say from my own knowledge that his experience is common enough to be well worth the attention of the high dignitaries of Russia who have the good of their country at heart. The same determined will and generous spirit that decreed and firmly carried out the emancipation of about thirty million of slaves may find it a more difficult task to purify the public departments of the government.

Although my friend had told me that direct smuggling, or "running a cargo," was in a great measure superseded by the ease with which fraud can be practised legally and safely through the custom-house itself, I chanced to find very soon after this conversation that direct smuggling is still carried on, to some extent at least.

One evening I was on the quay in front of the custom-house looking for a ship whose captain, I knew, had brought me a small parcel from friends far away. It was dusk, and the patrol were in their gray coats, walking about in various directions, while the deck of every vessel in the harbour had the custom-house men in command, and every hatch was sealed up till morning brought the labourers to work again. When I had made out the well-known hull of the ship I wanted to find, carrying my eye along the bulwarks, I saw somebody seated on the rail, and taking him to be the man I wanted, scrambled over

three lighters, stumbling over as many watchmen, who lay there drunk or asleep—drunk no doubt.

"Dolphin a'hoy," I cried, "send a boat to the stairs; I want to see the skipper."

A voice from the figure on the rail replied in a much lower key, "Is that you, Smith? Don't make such a fool's noise, but stand where you are a minute."

Presently a boat, sculled by a boy, came under me, into which I dropt, and I was soon on the deck of the ship, face to face with Captain Stripes. I am not Smith, and consequently the skipper, I saw, was disappointed.

"Ah! it is you; how are you? I imagined it was Mr. Smith. But never mind, come into the cabin. Here, Tom, keep a look-out for Smith, and bring him on board."

As I crossed the after-hatch to reach the cabin, I found the ship's crew busy passing boxes, bales, and hampers over the side.

"Now," said the captain, after he had given me my little parcel and placed a square bottle with a box of cheroots on the table, "make yourself comfortable till I come back. I won't be long; but stay where you are till I do come."

Genuine cognac and the best cubans are not to be despised after a winter's poisoning with the villanous compounds sold in Petersburg and Moscow; so I bided his time philosophically. When he came back,

"Excuse me," he said, "for keeping you a prisoner

so long. The fact is, we have a little job on hand to-night, and I was waiting for Smith to pilot us."

"What!" I said, "smuggling?"

"A little that way. By the bye, you might be able to tell me how to find the place we want. Do you know Prince D——'s country-house?"

"Prince D——? why, that is the chief of—"

"Hold hard," said the captain; "that's the man. Do you know his place, and could you direct me how to find it?"

"Yes; I know his place perfectly. It is on the K—— Island; but unless you know some of the bearings, I could not direct you to it."

"What ever am I to do if that fellow Smith don't come? We are all ready. The officers on the quay are all bought; the watchmen in the lighters and on board are all lying in the scuppers drunk. Two of the ship's boats are full, and men are in them ready to heave off. It is now dark, and past the time. Will you not oblige me by steering the first boat to this place?"

"Not likely," I said. "I have no mind to become a contrabandist, and a target for the blunderbusses of the custom-house officers. I shall be off, wishing you a good-night and a safe run."

He followed me to the deck, and said something in a low voice to his men. In a moment I was lifted from my feet, put over the side, and received kicking in the arms of the men below, who placed me in the seat of honour, with the tiller in my hand.

There was no help for it. I could not jump over

and swim on shore. I could not bawl out, for I might be taken as an accomplice; besides, I own I had no wish to betray the skipper. But then, what was to be done? There were two large boats loaded, no doubt with brandy, gin, whisky, cigars, wine, tobacco, silks, lace, woollens, perhaps arms for the Poles; and a British subject was impressed against his will to become the pilot of a smuggling party on a large scale, "running" the goods from under the very shadow of the custom-house, and landing them at the residence of the chief officer and comptroller of customs. So I understood at the time, but afterwards learnt that the contemplated landing was at a place adjoining, and for another sort of customer. There was little time for thinking; the boats had put off, and were pulling slowly into the river, round the custom-house corner. The men in my boat were sniggering, and I heard the skipper's satisfied guffaw. This was a small foretaste of what I might expect pretty generally if their little scheme succeeded, and the thing got wind. "Wait a little, jolly tars," thought I, and resolved to take them round the island to the spot from which we started. The Neva has three courses to the gulf. The main course runs past the old city, and between it and the islands which lie in clusters along the Finnish coast. The largest two are called the Williams and the Petersburg Islands; these, as well as the smaller islands, are, of course, surrounded by smaller and larger branches of the main streams, so that a sail round any or all of these islands in very small steamers is a

favourite summer excursion with the Petersburgians. Having had many trips of this kind, I well knew the windings of the stream. The prince's residence is on one of the smaller islands to the right, and might easily be reached by an hour's pull; but I proposed to give my merry friends a little exercise. The boats were heavy; still we made good way up the "little Neva," passing under the Samson Bridge, and after a time we found, by a shouting in our rear, that somebody was giving chase. By my orders the sailors put on a spurt, and, in nautical phrase, "gave way with a will." Thus keeping our distance, as we passed the prince's place (which was unrecognised by any but myself), the pursuit was hotter, and the bawling to us to stop was louder. I had no doubt that Smith, having been late, and finding the boats gone, was following in a river boat. Had it been a government boat that followed, there would have been at least six oars, and we should soon have been overhauled; besides, there would have been its bullets whistling past our ears. We were a long way beyond the prince's country-house. But my crew were easily urged to pull for their lives, and Smith shouted in vain, until he gave us up. When my captain asked whether we had much farther to go, I replied, "Yes, a good bit." And so by one ruse and another, losing my bearings, running a-ground on shallows, getting into creeks and bends with no outlet, and so on, I managed to keep them all pulling away round this island during four or five hours. Just as daylight began to break, I had placed them in the

"Churney Retchka" (Black Stream), and almost within hail of their own ship. Another ten minutes would bring us alongside of the Dolphin. I had no wish to tread her decks again, and, telling the man in my boat to pull to the side where there was a landing-stage, I stepped from the boat; and, hailing my worthy skipper, said to him: "Captain Stripes, this is where I get out, and yonder ship is yours. Next time you try running a cargo, get a willing pilot. A volunteer is worth twenty pressed men. Who has the laugh now?"

He shook his fist goodnaturedly, and was so tickled with his own stupidity that he exploded in a burst of laughter; and as I turned away I heard him say to his man, "Sold, slick!" Then he shouted to me, "Stop and liquor. Coffee and rum in the Dolphin." But I hailed a cab instead, and drove home shivering with cold. I heard no more of the matter; but no doubt Smith was more punctual to his next appointment.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

BOND AND FREE.

THE great holiday—the Carnival in some countries —Maslinitza or Sweatoi in Russia, the butter-week before Lent, is a time when the Russians give full scope to their powers of frolic. Waistless peasant women come abroad in all their finery of pink skirts, straight from heels to armpits, snowy teraphins, high-crowned head-dresses quivering with tinsel ornaments, red handkerchiefs, wide white sleeves, red ribbons, and with much cordage of Siberian beads adorning their dun-coloured necks. The unmarried girls, with a yard of plaited black hair, are long-tailed charmers of the males, who don their best gray felts and sheep-skins, blue caftans, polished boots, little low-crowned hats studded with white buckles and small peacock's-feathers, and gird their loins with a red, blue, and white worsted sash. Such holiday-makers had taken possession of Evanoffsky, and were to their best ability making merry. They must make the most of their seven days, for after them shall follow a fast of seven weeks, during which no animal food is eaten. No man may then look on his wife, no sweetheart think of her betrothed; deeds of charity, prayer, penitence,

confession, and self-denial are supposed to constitute the sum of human life. Harry and I during those weeks must kill our own meat, for nobody else will be our butcher. And so, to make the most of the holiday-week, parties of drunken moushicks stagger through the roads clasping one another round the neck, others lie sprawling on the ground among the dogs and pigs. The cabaks are full of customers, gulping down fiery vodki. You may see men go in quite sober, stand at the counter five minutes, throw back their heads four or five times as each tumbler-full vanishes, crying "Augh, charoshy!" (good) at each drain. Having in this short time drunk four English gills of the strong rye brandy, they stagger out, go a few steps, and fall into the nearest ditch. There are parties with bottles in their hands hugging and kissing each other, and singing snatches of plaintive songs in a minor key; others, again, with an accordion—price sixpence—play some jingling tune to others, who dance—or rather make desperate efforts to dance—before groups of admirers, who all join in chorus. The songs are all simple. Take for example an universal favourite,—*Auch! mi paddy protch*, of which here is one verse literally translated:

"O, dear me, go away with you!
Take off your hat and pay your respects:
I'm not a baron; I'm not a merchant;
But for all that, I'm a very nice young man.
Then go away with you!
Take off your hat and pay your respects."

Then there is the never-failing Punch hard upon

Judy; there are swings, hobby-horses, shows and theatres, dancing-bears, jugglers, and monkeys. But the grand feature of a Russian village carnival is the dreadful labour to which horse-flesh is subjected. Every horse that can stand, even on three legs; every sledge, or, if the snow be gone, every vehicle that can be patched up with birch-bark, or tied together with twigs or ropes, when these are attainable, is being driven about, without any definite object, from one point to another through the village, at a rate limited only by the full powers of each horse, and the strength of the driver's whip-arm. Those who have no horses bargain with those who have. Men and women, boys, girls, old gray-headed moushicks and hooded babas with infants,—all who are sober enough to hold on, ride at this jovial time, whooping, singing, and shouting at the full stretch of their voices. Moushick wit is flying in all directions, as the carriages pass one another; and two dozen of neck-and-neck races may be going on at one time. All this continues from morning till night for three days, when the cattle are dead beat with fatigue.

At Evanoffsky this junketing was over, Maslinitza, the butter-week, was past, and fasting had begun. Priests and people had scarcely slept off the effects of the revelry when the people were summoned to the church to hear read by the holy father, our old friend of the cards, the ukase that would make them free. As all ukases are promulgated from the altar, the priests all over Russia read this document, gave it their blessing, sent the people away,

and washed their hands of the job. Emissaries, however, from the disaffected, who ground their teeth at the new policy, and called the Emperor the Great Moushick, were sent amongst the serfs, and caused a little trouble in some districts distant from the capital. Crafty agitators went about reading false papers, that purported to give immediate release from work. The serfs in Kazan and some other governments were caught in the trap. Some seventeen thousand collected in one place, set the local law and their masters at defiance, and proceeded to acts of violence and plunder. The soldiers were called out, and the serfs were put down, but not until some hundreds had been shot. With this exception, and one or two smaller affairs, the peasantry, as at Evanoffsky, received the news quietly. Tumultuous rising among the serfs, in order to damage their cause, was the point aimed at by the emissaries of their enemies; in this they failed, but the peasants did get it into their heads that the Emperor meant more for them than was told in the ukase. They had hopes that the land would be given them without purchase; that money would also be given to help them to work it. Some of them fancied that a millennium of wealth without labour was at hand; and though Alexander II. has since that time made the tour of his chief cities and towns for the express purpose of explaining in person that no more was to be expected from him in that direction, still the serf holds out his hand and says "prebavit," still he looks for more favours. In this lies a future difficulty. It is in the nature of Russian peasants to

depend on gifts of others rather than on independent labour. It is said, that when a Russian child first opens his mouth in the world he says "prebavit," that is, "add to it." If you pay a Russian ten times the value of any piece of work, he will invariably, in a piteous whining tone, hold out his hand and say "prebavit"—add a little more. This propensity is strangely manifested in regard to the new law, and troubles may yet come of it. A beggar will never work until his own trade altogether fails him.

For some weeks before the great holiday the peasants at Evanoffsky and the workmen at the factories had shown insubordination to the steward. He found it impossible to carry on the necessary work. Half the "souls" pretended to be on the sick-list. The starost and his sotnicks had a hard time of it in dragging the refractory, by orders of the steward, to the stanovog for punishment, and then driving them to work. It was of little use; the souls resisted sullenly; what work was done was spoiled, and several machines were broken. A plot was discovered just in time to save a large steam-engine from being wholly smashed.

Groups of able-bodied peasants gathered in the roads or sauntered through the villages. The steward sent for the military commandant; but he replied that so long as the moushicks were quiet he must refer him to the resident magistrate, the stan. The stan would not take the responsibility of bringing in the soldiers; and with all these difficulties the steward, poor man, was nearly mad with rage and

vexation. Regardless of the altered and altering state of the peasants' feelings, he kept the stick in constant work. His house-servants came in for a full share of his bad temper. They had long suffered his kicking and cuffing for faults and no faults. So keenly did their tormentor relish the stick-discipline, that he had made it a rule every morning while enjoying his pipe and coffee to have one or two of his servants, male or female, beaten by men from the police-station. In fact he had been and was a merciless tyrant; but the tables were about to turn.

On the third morning after Maslinitza, just as he was turning on his other side to try another nap (I have the scene from one of the actors), a big strong moushick, who acted as the steward's coachman, entered the room rather unceremoniously, and bawled out in a peremptory voice,

"Come, master, get up quick! You're wanted in the great hall."

The steward started at the unusual summons, and stared at the fellow in blank astonishment, unable to understand what he meant.

"Come, I tell you; rise—you're wanted."

"Dog!" roared the steward, almost powerless with rage—"what do you mean by this insolence? Get out!"

"No," said the man, "I won't get out. You get up. They are all waiting."

"Pig! I'll make you pay for this, let me get hold of you, you villain!" and he jumped out of bed; but as he did so he perceived three of his other men ser-

vants at the threshold ready to support the coachman.

"O, this is a conspiracy; but I'll soon settle you. Evan, you devil, where are you? Come here."

Evan thus called—he was a lacquey—appeared at the door with a broad grin on his face.

"Did you call, master?"

"Yes, villain; don't you see? I am going to be murdered by these pigs. Go instantly for the policemen."

"No, no, baron; I have gone too often for the stan's men. We can do without them this morning."

"Come, come, master," again struck in the tall coachman, "don't you waste our time and keep the company waiting. Put on your halat; never mind the rest of your clothes; you won't need them for a little. You won't come—nay, but you must." And he laid hold of him by the neck. "Come along!" and so they dragged their victim into the great dining-hall.

There, sitting round the room on chairs and lolling on the sofas, were all the souls belonging to his domestic establishment, about thirty in all. Pillows were spread on the floor in the middle of the room; to these the steward was dragged, and forcibly stretched on them face down, with two men at his feet and two at his head.

The coachman, who had been pretty frequently chastised in former times, was ringleader. He sat down on a large easy-chair, the seat of honour, and

ordered a pipe and coffee. This was brought him by one of the female servants. When the long cherry-tree tube began to draw, in imitation of his master's manner he puffed out the smoke, put on a fierce look, stretched out his legs, and said, "Now then, go on. Give the pig forty blows! creapka (hard)!"

In an instant the halat was torn up, and two lacqueys, standing at either side, armed with birch rods, slowly and deliberately commenced the flagellation. The coachman told off the blows as he smoked in dignity, "one, two, three," and so on to forty.

"Now, then," said coachee, "stop. Brothers and sisters, have we done right?"

"Right!" they all said.

"Is there one here whom he has not beaten?"

"None."

"Are you satisfied?"

"Yes."

"Then go, all of you, home, and leave this house. Not one must remain. Release the prisoner."

Up jumped their tyrant, little the worse bodily for the beating he had got, but he was livid with rage. His face turned green and purple, he gnashed his teeth, and spat on his rebellious slaves. Speech seemed gone, and they all laughed in his face.

"Master," said the coachman, walking leisurely towards the door, "we have not hurt you, but have given you a small taste of your own treatment of us for many years; how do you like it? We are free now, or will be soon, and will not be beaten any more. Good-bye; don't forget the stick. And listen. If

you whisper a breath against any of us for this morning's work, your life is not worth a kopeck two hours after." Each made a respectful bow as he or she went out, and the tyrant was left alone in the deserted house.

It may be supposed that this incident is heightened by the imagination of the writer. I can only say that it is repeated as I got it in Russian from Mattvie, the starost's son, one of the actors. It was much talked of in Russia at the time it happened.

This was a memorable day in Evanoffsky. When I had breakfasted, and was listening to the conclusion of Mattvie's account of the steward's castigation, I observed that several parties, evidently from distant journeys, drove by my windows, and turned into the gate leading to the court-house. I did not know why there should be so many ghosties, but could guess they boded no good to the unjust steward. Dismissing Matt with a rebuke for his share in the morning's work—a rebuke which, by the bye, did not come from my heart—I sat down at a window facing the main road leading to the lake. This window was not far from the ground, and had been dismantled of its winter frame. Various bands of peasants were to be seen lounging about the road, and particularly around the gates leading to the works and the count's house. Small crowds had collected, and in the centre of one of these my late visitor Matt could be seen, gesticulating violently, as his tongue went at full speed. Presently I saw the steward come from the direction of his own house. He

seemed to speak angrily, with stamping of his feet at the first two or three parties he passed; but they heeded him not, farther than to get beyond reach of his arm. He was a rather corpulent man, low in height, with a very large flat flabby face, and his cheeks hung down on either side; his nose had grown big at the point, divided in the middle like Dumbarton Rock, and was covered with a mass of blue and purple pimples. When he came to the main group at the gate he peremptorily ordered them to go to work. I had opened the window and could now hear every word. The men shrugged their shoulders; he went passionately in amongst them, calling them pigs, &c. They made way for him, but lounged into a new position, exhibiting by the act contemptuous indifference. The crowd began to concentrate itself about the gate, and I heard an unwonted sound, ominous at that hour—the steam blowing off. This indicated a stoppage of the mills and the release of perhaps a thousand hands.

Yet still, in the fury of the moment, though alone among these people, every one of whom could have slain him without compunction, the unhappy steward went on kicking, cuffing, and swearing. Seeing Matt, he ordered him off to the stables, using a foul expression. Matt only gave the usual shrug and maintained his ground, receiving for his contumacy a slap in the face from his master's right hand. Matt was a strong fellow, and the blow fell on his cheek like a passing breeze, but I saw his eyes glare and his cheek flush. Matt looked the tyrant straight in the

eyes for a moment, and then spat in his face. The Russian spit of contempt, the most unpardonable of Russian insults, is unlike any other kind of spitting. The Yankee squirt is a scientific affair; Englishmen who smoke short black pipes in bars, on rails, and elsewhere, expectorate in an uncleanly clumsy way. But with an intense look of detestation, as he says, "Ah, pig!" the Russian, with the suddenness and good aim of a pistol-shot, plunges a ball of spittle right into the face or on the clothes of his adversary, making a sound like the stroke of a marble where it hits. It is a weapon always ready. I have frequently seen a duel maintained with it for a considerable time at short range.

Matt, having thus shown his contempt, coolly leaned himself up against the gate; but the steward, insulted as he had never been before in this characteristic manner, before so many of his cringing slaves, lost any remains of reason his rage might have left him. He used hands and feet on the crowd of passive and hitherto quiet serfs; and seeing the old starost—Matt's father—coming up the road, he ran and collared the old man, dragged him to where his son stood, and roared out his orders to take the devil into the stan's yard for punishment.

"Old devil!" he said, "you are at the bottom of all this rebellion, you and your son. You shall flog *him;* and then I shall make him flog *you.* Go, pig, and take him away!"

The old man, for the first time in his life, openly disobeyed his tyrant's orders. He folded his arms

across his sheepskin coat, gave the usual shrug, spat contemptuously on the ground, and said, "No, steward, that is your work. Now I will not."

"Dog! devil! do you refuse to obey your master? I will, if it is my work, drag you to punishment myself."

With that he seized the starost by his luxuriant white beard, and began pulling him towards the next house, which, I have said, was the magistrate's and the police-station. The old man resisted with all his might, and in the struggle he fell, leaving a large mass of gray or rather white hair in the steward's hands. The steward, finding he could not pull the starost by main force, lifted his foot shod with heavy leather goloshes, and struck the old man twice on the head. The blood immediately ran down. Up to this moment the crowd of peasants, which had increased enormously, had been quiet spectators of the scene; but the sight of the old man's blood gave the finishing touch to their patience. Without a word the crowd began slowly to move and concentrate itself around the steward and his fallen official. There might then have been five or six hundred people, and the numbers were increasing every moment, as the men came in from the stopped works. A rush took place, and the centre space was filled up with the mass. The bleeding starost was passed to the outside. The steward was surrounded, and many hands were laid on him. I do not believe there had been any premeditated design to hurt the steward, cordially as they all hated him. Had he applied the

lesson given him that morning, and apprehended the changed feelings and circumstances of the serfs, he might have passed from among them without further injury. But his passions were ungovernable, and he was slow to believe in the possibility of any resistance on the part of the poor slaves he had so long driven. The crowd swayed heavily from one side to another, tugging and pulling the poor steward about; and now he was in peril of his life. My window was wide open. He made a mute appeal to me for help. I signed to him to try the window. By some extraordinary effort he broke loose, and made a rush and a spring to catch the sill. He succeeded so far, and two pair of strong arms were trying to drag the fat body through into the room; but we were too late, or rather he was too heavy for us. The crowd tore him down, and held him fast. Then a voice was heard, clear and decided as that of an officer giving the word of command,—"To the water!" The voice was Mattvie's. A leader and an object had been wanted, and here there were both. Instantly the order was obeyed. The crowd, dragging the steward, left the front of my house, and took the direction of the lake.

Without thinking, I picked up my double-barrel and six-shooter, and was rushing out of doors, with what intention I know not, when I ran against Saunderson. He no sooner saw the weapons, than he cried out in broad Scotch, "Whaur noo, ye mad deevil? guns and pistols! it's no wolves and bears ye're gaun to shoot, is it? Lord, man, you're surely mad.

Pit them up, pit them up; there maun be nae shootin' this day. It winna do."

"Mr. Saunderson, let me pass; I cannot see that man, bad as he is, murdered before my eyes without trying to help him."

"Ay, an' get yersel' torn to pieces for your pains. Come, lay by the barkers; this quarrel is none or ours. Whaur's yere man Friday? I hope he is safe out of this scrape."

As the man Friday he always spoke of Harry.

"I cannot tell; he was here a minute or two ago."

"Weel, never mind; lay by the weapons, and let us go and try what smooth words will do; come quick, or we'll be too late."

A moment's reflection told me Saunderson was right. The deadly weapons were laid aside, and we hurried through the court-yard down to the end of the cotton-mill, and came out on the banks of the lake, just as the raging crowd of serfs were tying a mat with a large stone in it to the steward's neck.

Around the margin of the lake the ice was to some extent broken, and their evident intention was to throw him in. We ran to meet them, and if possible prevent the horrid act of retribution. But we were too late; they had selected the part of the bank nearest the road, as it was higher than the rest; and just as we came panting up, we saw the body of the steward swaying in the hands of a dozen of the men, and heard the fatal words given out by Matt: "*Ras, dwa, tree*" (one, two, three); then a cry of despair, above the yelling of the crowd; then a

plunge in the water; no, two plunges. The ragoshkie, or bark mat, containing the heavy stone which was to keep the steward down, had not been a good one; for as the body passed through the air, the stone fell from the mat, splashing a second or two before, and a little beyond the spot where he came down. He disappeared under the water for a moment or two, then made desperate efforts to scramble to his feet, in which he succeeded, standing up to his shoulders in the shallow water, with the mat-bag, drenched and limp, hanging from his neck. There he stood within twenty feet of the bank, facing a thousand yelling enemies. Outside was plenty of firm ice; but between it and him there might be thirty feet of deep clear water, the bed of the lake dipping many feet immediately beyond where he stood. He seemed to comprehend his position, and was evidently making up his mind to contend with the deep water rather than with the turned worms upon the bank. He had raised one arm, either for entreaty or defiance, and had taken a few steps towards the ice, when one of the many stones thrown at him struck the uplifted arm, and it fell powerless to his side. Another, but a softer missile, struck him on the head. He fell again under the water, and again recovered his feet; but the stones were now dashing like hail about him. The serfs were as boys pelting a toad or frog,—and their victim in the water did look like a great over-grown toad.

Saunderson and I had made several attempts to be heard, or to divert the attention of the people; but

it was spending idle breath: "Go away; it is not your business," some of the men said; others, more savage, asked how we would like the same treatment.

Saunderson whispered in my ear, "Look to the other side of the loch, and tell me if yonder is not a conveyance coming."

"It is," I said.

"Then, thank God, that's the Count. O for five minutes! But how to get them. You see, I'm a man wi' a family, so are you, or we might jump beside him and gain a few minutes."

He had scarcely spoken, when my man Harry, who had been standing at our backs, and had heard Saunderson's remark, said, "I'll try. Blow me if I don't: the buffer's a bad lot; but I sha'n't see him killed. Here goes!" with that he jumped into the water, and was by the side of the steward in a moment.

The noise and stoning ceased when the serfs saw Harry—who had become a prime favourite amongst them all—place himself in front of the poor battered half-drowned steward.

"Now then, you murdering humbugs, fire away! but mind, the moushick as strikes me with a stone, I'll settle him with my fist when I get out."

They did not understand a word he said; but for a little they were amazed at the daring act. This mood soon passed, and a voice, Matt's again, cried, "Come out, Harrie Harriovitch, and let the niemitz die alone!"

"For shame, Mattvie Gregorovitch," cried Saun-

derson; "is this learning to be free? Do you begin your new life with murder?"

"My God, baron, how can I help it? He has brought it all on himself, has he not? Am I to blame? Let him die! Harrie, come out. You must; if not, I'll send men to force you away from that son of a she-wolf. Don't you see five hundred stones ready? I cannot now stop them if I would. But I don't want to stop them. Let him die, I say."

Harry, who knew enough Russian to understand the purport of this speech, shouted, "No, you murdering thief; I mayn't leave him now with my life. In for a penny, in for a pound. Fire away, you cowards!"

"Then go pull him away," said Matt. "Harrie Harriovitch must not be killed."

A rush of many men into the water—a fierce struggle—several knocked down by Harry's ponderous arms. But after all, despite his strength, numbers prevailed, and he was pulled to the bank kicking tremendously. Just at this moment, when the attention of all was fixed on the scene in the water, a sleigh, drawn by three magnificent greys, dashed into the crowd and drew up in the very centre of it. Three gentlemen, muffled in furs, occupied the sleigh; two of them were men in official costume. The third rose up, threw back his rich black foxskin cloak, and the assembled mob had before them the old Count Pomerin, dressed in the full uniform of a general. He was a tall, well-built man. I had seen him last when he was a disguised man, evad-

ing political exile, a good deal nearer to his own estate than people thought; but the ban was taken from him now, the great beard had disappeared, and he looked the nobleman he was. No man had been better informed than he as to the past mismanagement of his estate. He glanced rapidly at the mob; then at the man in the water, and appeared to comprehend the whole case in a moment. He then said, with a quiet and significant smile, while breathless silence was in all the crowd, "Is that my steward having a bath in this cold weather? It is a singular taste surely, but he knows best; I hope, my children, you don't interrupt him. Now go home: put on the best holiday clothes you have, and meet me at my house in two hours. I want to see every one of you. Mr. Steward, please to leave your cold bath, and meet me in the contore (office) as soon as possible. We have some accounts to settle, and must have you there. Mattvie Gregorovitch, see my orders obeyed. Drive on." And with a kindly nod to me and Saunderson as he passed (for we had been in his secret, and knew that he was come well prepared to surprise his steward), he drove off, and was round the corner and out of sight in less than a minute. I need not tell how the people shouted, how they were too late to get the horses out, that they might drag their returned master in triumph to his house; how tenderly they helped the steward out of his cold bath. He stared as if he had seen a ghost. Mattvie attended him with ten others to his house, and prevented him from making his es-

cape with a bundle of important documents and any money he could lay his hands on. The peasants, a few minutes ago yelling for vengeance, now yelled as loudly for joy; danced and kissed one another, and went home and got out their best kaftans and teraphins, and polished up their leather boots. The pope set the church-bells ringing. The stanavoie and his men kept good order, when there was no use for them. And my man Harry stood on the bank dripping wet, shaking hands with the moushicks he had been knocking down.

In the contore, or counting-house, about an hour after, the steward showed himself in no agreeable state of either mind or body. He had been flogged, drowned, and stoned by the serfs; now he was about to be skinned by the Count, and this skinning process would be the unkindest cut of all. As he sat shivering, his left arm in a sling, the picture of sullen dejected, detected rascality, I almost pitied him. Besides the Count there were present many country dealers in wood, wool, corn, and other produce; also several merchants from Moscow and Petersburg, with whom the steward had had large business transactions. The books of the estate were there on one table, and on another were a vast number of documents tied up and labelled. These last were under the immediate care of the Count.

"Now," said he, addressing the steward, "the time has come, sir, when you and I must square accounts. You may not be prepared to meet a master you imagined to be dead;—but a just steward

is always ready. At all events *I* am prepared personally to examine your accounts, and, on certain terms, give you a settlement. This must be done at once—now. Or you may prefer being handed over to the police. How shall it be?"

The steward instantly, though very faintly, said, "Now—now; no police."

"Well, now let it be." Then taking up a bundle of papers, he said, "Here are eighteen documents made out by you, and given to my Countess, purporting to be the yearly statement of your eighteen years' management of my estate and people; income on one side, and expenditure on the other. By examining these and looking no farther, I find myself considerably poorer than when I left you in charge. Here are mortgages, sales, and liabilities. My people are fewer, poorer, and ten times more miserable. It is impossible to go over all the accounts, indeed it is not necessary; but I have picked out a few which require explanation. For the four years during which my wife and son have kept account of their expenditure, I find a difference of nearly 100,000 roubles between your account and theirs. Take the year 1859, when my son travelled in France, Italy, and England: your statement gives 70,000 as my family expenditure—whereas they acknowledge to no more than 40,000. Your vouchers amount to no more. Can you produce others to make up the difference?"

"No; I am caught in a trap like a wolf. Have mercy on an old man!"

"Can you make up the difference on the other three years?"

"No! Have mercy, Count!"

"Then I write down against you 100,000 roubles. Take now the horse account. Since you began to deal with Baranoff, there are 245 horses bought, at a cost, according to your statements, of 42,000 roubles. Stand forth, Baranoff, and say what you received for these horses."

Baranoff, one of the chief gipsy horse-dealers, advanced, and produced a paper showing that 15,000 roubles was the real sum paid him for the cattle.

"It is false!" cried the steward; "don't believe him, your Excellency. Ah, God help me; I am in a trap."

"It is not false. I have very good reasons to know that he speaks the truth. If you can show receipts of his for more, do it. No? Then I write 27,000 roubles against you on the horse account."

"Ah, this is dreadful. Have mercy, Count!"

Then came the corn and rye account, and 57,000 roubles were added to the list; Alexy Evanoff and Abraham Isaacoff, the Jew corn-dealers, being witnesses. The wool-merchants, wood-dealers, lessees of the works, those who had employed the "souls," and a host of other parties, whose accounts had been falsified, came rapidly in review; the sum against the steward mounting higher and higher at every step, until the enormous total of 1,000,000 roubles was made out. This sum he was compelled to refund on the spot, in cash, bills, and other securities.

After which he had twenty-four hours given him to leave the estate, and was not sorry to go, taking with him the detestation of every soul on it; and, we had no doubt, a large remainder of ill-gotten gains.

The strict examination of his steward's accounts had consumed several hours; so that it was long past noon when the Count met his serfs, according to his orders, at the front of his own residence. On this large flat piece of ground were assembled several thousands of peasants, male and female. On the front step, on his own threshold, stood the Count, and beside him his Countess, his son, and several more distant relations, with others of less note, myself, Saunderson, the two popes of the village, and many of the merchants who had been assisting at the stripping of the steward. Several attempts had been made by the peasants to throw themselves on the ground; but the Count ordered them in a peremptory tone to stand up and hear what he had to say. After referring to his long absence, and telling how he came, by the clemency of the Emperor, to be again amongst them, he said, "I have ordered you to meet me here, that I may personally give every one on my estate freedom to leave and seek employment elsewhere. If what I am about to propose do not suit you, you know, my children, that Alexander, the son of Nicholas, has wisely ordained that in two years from now your connection and mine, as it now exists, is to cease. Now, I do not intend to wait so long. The law allows us to dis-

solve that old connection when we please. I will dissolve it now; and so far as I am concerned, it is dissolved from this moment. I hold no serfs. You are all, men and women, free. Go in peace; and I thank the Almighty God that I have been preserved and brought back to do you this act of justice." Here he paused, and stood uncovered for a minute. Then a murmur of dissatisfaction seemed to pass through the crowd. The Count continued: "Do not imagine that I want any of you to leave me. Hear my proposition, and then go and decide.

"The law gives each male peasant five deciatines of my land. For this you must pay me fifteen roubles each deciatine, and be independent. Can you do this? Tell me."

A loud "Neato, neato," ran round the crowd.

"Well, the law gives you nine years to pay that sum to me in yearly instalments. This makes you, after 1863, my tenants for nine years. Such a state of things I do not intend to permit. As you cannot pay for the land now, and as I want you all to have absolute freedom, I give it to you without price. It is yours. Every male peasant on my estate will be, as soon as possible, put in possession of this quantity of such land as a joint committee of two on each side shall decide. All disputes, before going before the government referee, will be referred to me. In giving you this land, you will remember I am giving away a sixth of my estate for nothing. Do you accept the terms?"

The whole assembled multitude this time went

down on their knees and cried, "Thanks, thanks, good Count, illustrious master—God bless you!" After the first emotion had partly subsided, ten old grey-bearded moushicks advanced to the Count, and after making the usual salutation, one of them said, "We hear, O Count, and give you thanks,—high-born master! It is a great gift you bestow, and we are grateful; but prebavit (add to it)! Five deciatines will no doubt give us garden-land, and corn and rye and farm-land. We had this before. But where are our cows and horses to get grass, and where can we make hay? For many years this land you now give us will not support our cattle. We have always been allowed pasture. Add this to your gift; and may God give you blessing, and peace, and plenty, Alexander, the son of Gregoriva!" Prebavit!

A voice at my ear whispered, "Gie Jacky an inch, an' he'll tak an ell. The eternal 'prebavit.'"

I could see that the Count winced at this demand; but smoothing his countenance he again spoke: "I had not expected that, after receiving a free gift of nearly a sixth of my property, you would ask another large slice in the shape of pasture-land. But I will not do things by halves. For ten years I shall allot you a sufficient extent of land for this purpose; but at the end of this time you must be prepared to do without it, or pay for it. Will this content you?"

Another kneeling, prostration, and loud murmuring of thanks. A pause. The ten old moushicks advanced again to the charge.

The same voice whispered, "Prebavit again, no

doubt. If he gies in to them, they'll no' leave him a stick that he can ca' his ain."

"Alexander, the son of Gregoriva, again we hear and give you thanks, and the blessing of the poor moushicks be with you! But hear us this once. You have given us farm-land and pasture-land; we thank you and bless you. These are great gifts. But what are we to do for droff (firewood)? Where are we to get wood to make our jelogas and to build our houses? Add to the gift droff. Prebavit! We have always had this. Our fathers had it. So had our grandfathers and great grandfathers. If it please your high-born excellency, add droff to your gifts."

"Prebavit, prebavit, always prebavit," said the Count. "When will you have done? I have already given you land—much land—without price, and made you independent farmers. You might have been content, and bought your wood from me. But since long use has given you the idea that the wood is free to you, and as there is plenty of it for all, let it be so. I shall mark off a sufficient range of wood for your use. The rest I retain for myself. Is this satisfactory?"

Thanks, prostrations, consultations, and again "prebavit" for liberty to fish in the lakes,—granted under certain restrictions. Again came "prebavit" for something else—I forget what. But the Count, who seemed to have reached the limits of his generosity, peremptorily declined listening to the petition, and concluded the meeting by saying, that as many if not all of them were too poor to be able to put all

their strength on their land, he would, of course, employ any who chose to work for him as free labourers in the factories and on his estate. They who wished an advance of money to help them, by giving their land as security, might have it at easy interest. They who preferred roaming the country in idleness or in quest of other work and other homes might get their passports and depart. All the arrangements were ready. He advised them all to go home, and appoint their starost, overseers, and committee, that they might be ready at once to act with him and his agents in carrying out the change on which they were agreed.

Thus ended that memorable day for Evanoffsky. Count Pomerin was only one of many generous landowners who have freed their serfs in this manner before and since the emancipation-law was promulgated. And they have nearly all gained by their gift of a more perfect freedom.

I have visited the estate of Count Pomerin since, in 1864; and I can only say, that in that short time the change which has taken place is almost miraculous. Evanoffsky is not now a large straggling village of mud huts, but a thriving town. The people are not like the same beings; and there is now decided evidence of the rise of a middle class,—a class once unknown in such places.

It has been my object in these sketches to give as faithful a view as I could of the condition of Russia immediately before the promulgation of the emanci-

pation ukase. Still living among the Russians, I take note of the progress of events under the new system; and in ten years from the date of the extinction of Russian serfdom, I may, if I live, describe the change it will have made in Russian Life. It is now too soon after the event to judge by its fruits.

I put forth my little record of what serfdom was when this grand act of justice came; and though I may not live to tell, Russia will live to know what it is to have given freedom to so many of her children.

THE END.

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